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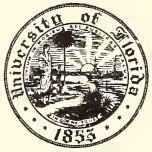

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My Felicia

A NOVEL

BY

PAUL DRISCOLL

NEW YORK

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1945

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FELICIA · SPRING

I

THAT WAS A GOOD APRIL. The breeze was warm on Felicia Zielinski's back, warm on her shoulders and on the deep V of her throat. She was home from school, her mother early from the mill, and they were sitting on the front steps in the sunshine. Her mother said in Polish: "Speak kindly to the people."

"In Polish, Ma?"

"My child, of course."

Then the people came. They came up the street from the left, from the red mill with the bright white windows. Beyond the mill was the river, and the river ran into the sea. Felicia could smell the mill from her house but not the sea. To the right of the house, on the Avenue, the streetcars passed always.

Mr. Sikorski came first from the mill. He bowed ceremoniously to the pair on the steps.

"*Dzien dobry, pani Zielinska, panna Zielinska.*"

"*Dzien dobry, pan Sikorski.*"

"Hello," said Felicia.

Adam Sikorski's little eyes smiled. He bowed again, to Felicia. "How are you?" he said proudly, pleased with the sound of his English. "Swell." He passed by.

Felicia's mother turned angrily. In Polish, she said, "I told you——"

"Oh, Ma, here comes Mrs. Gorczyca——"

Anyone could identify Mrs. Gorczyca a mile away, for her

abdomen protruded with at least six months of child. She seemed to take minutes to trudge as far as the steps; her head turned wearily.

"*Dzien dobry, pani Gorczyca.*"

Mother's voice was dubious, implying disapproval. It seemed to say, *I'm not so sure about you. Maybe you're wicked to work so long. Maybe you ought to have more sense——*

"*Dzien dobry, pani Zielinska.*"

A sullen tone. A touch of resentment. Saying perhaps: *What would you have me do—kill the others for this one? Stop work, and who would feed us? That husband, that drunk? You see all he's good for. . . .*

Mrs. Gorczyca dragged herself past. Her eyes were on the sidewalk.

Felicia moved petulantly. The sun was hot on her right shoulder, Mother's bony knees jabbed into her back. Then she forgot discomfort, for here came Komar.

Komar was an office worker in the mill, a big pimply man with an easy stride. He bought stocks, people said. Stocks in the stock market. In one day he made fifty dollars! With that he had put down a payment on a new Ford car. . . . A bachelor. Even some of the high school girls were out to catch Theophil Komar.

He ran his eyes deliberately up Felicia's legs. She could feel the blood hot in her cheeks and wondered, without daring to move, if her dress were down. Grinning, Komar bowed.

"*Dzien dobry, pani Zielinska, panna Felicia.*"

"*Dzien dobry, pan Komar.*"

"Hi, there," said Felicia.

2

Zielinski. Felicia Zielinski. Felicia Jadwiga Zielinski. *Jezus Chrystus,* what a name.

In high school the name was a help, because the teachers seated their classes according to the alphabet and Felicia nearly always got the last seat in the last row. If you had a front seat the boys would look you over every time you stood up, and if you weren't wearing a nice dress you wouldn't feel like reciting. Sometimes Felicia thought she never would have done half so well in school if her name had been Abbott or Aaron.

The only person who ever sat behind her was a sober, tow-headed boy named Pete Zonak. When she and Pete were assigned to the same classes, in September, they would both head for the rear corner of the room. Felicia would pretend to give him a dirty look.

"Hello, Polack."

Pete would grin, "Hello, Polack."

Only a Polack could call her that. . . . She was a sophomore; she had gone to a junior room to reserve tickets to a play. The boy taking the reservations glanced at her without interest or civility.

"Name?"

"Zielinski." She felt inordinately nervous. The boy brushed a speck from his tweed coat, which made him look handsome, and scratched his auburn hair. Felicia remembered seeing him in the football games. He was cute, the girls said. His name was Stephen O'Mara.

"Spell it."

"Z-i-e-l-i-n-s-k-i."

"Oh." The boy wrote with a flourish. "Polack, huh?" He handed her the reservation.

She reached for it in dumb silence. She was halfway down the corridor before she could believe he'd said it. Then: "You mick!" she muttered. "You lousy, damned, conceited mick——" O'Mara couldn't hear her.

A week later, he was striding down the first-floor corridor. Felicia's heart pounded. She opened her mouth. *Bastard,* she thought. *If I can't think of anything to say I'll spit at you.*

O'Mara glanced at her—and winked. . . . The next time, he looked through her and past her, as though he'd never seen her before.

> *All right* [Felicia scrawled in her diary, furiously], *I'm just a scrawny kid. But I'll get even with you, O'Mara, if it takes me all my life——*

Such conflicts did not often occur between kids of different races. One of Felicia's closest friends, Cecile St. Andre, was a French-Canadian whose parents worked in the mills. As for the Portuguese, they were clever; they progressed; the treasurer of Felicia's class, Joe Sylvia, was a Portuguese and another was a big star on the football team. Some of the girls would go out with a Portugee if he weren't too utterly dark.

The Jews, of course, were an exception, and always seemed to be causing trouble. If a student named Dycewski or Madeiras or Favreau won a prize or got on the honor roll, the others said nothing. But when the triumphant one's name was Cohen or Rabinovitz, Felicia heard her friends whispering: "Those damn' kikes. You can't get ahead of them, can you?". . . and it was a fact that the Jewish girls were a rather queer lot. They were likely to be loud and assertive among themselves, self-conscious and constrained with others. Felicia couldn't understand it.

A little dissension occurred each morning, though that had less to do with race than religion. The teacher in home room read the Bible—the Protestant Bible, someone said—and then all were supposed to say the Lord's Prayer in unison. But the Catholic students would pray only as far as "deliver us from evil," where some of them would insert "Amen!" good and loud. So the Protestants would go on alone: "For Thine

is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." The Jews just sat there with their heads bowed.

Mother said that the Jews ran everything in Poland, too, and that some day someone would come and drive them out.

4

Once in junior high the English teacher said that immigrants always saw first the Statue of Liberty, which she said was on Ellis Island, and of which there was a picture in the textbook. That afternoon Felicia asked her mother:

"Ma, did you see the Statue of Liberty?"

Her mother was soaking her feet in a bucket of warm water, with salt, because she had had a hard day at the mill. "*Co?*"

"The Statue of Liberty. You know, when you came over."

Mother shook her head. It was never easy to get her to talk about the old country. Soldiers also were like that about wars, people said. . . . Mother had lived on a farm. Now when they tried to grow tomatoes in the back yard, Mother often exclaimed: "This little patch! In the old country, we had a *farm*"—and her eyes swept over the tenements as though surveying a hundred lost, remembered acres.

Actually it had been a small farm, with too many people living off it. Mother said how lucky Felicia was, with only two brothers. She herself had lived with three brothers, four sisters, her parents, a grandparent. One of the brothers was planning to go to America, but the army came for him first. Then it was decided Mother might go. In a few years she could come back with her money—they paid real money wages in America, even to peasants—and the family would buy a better farm. It made her feel like a heroine, Mother remembered, though she was only fifteen.

"Please, Ma," Felicia said, "*didn't* you see it?"

Mother smiled and took her feet from the bucket. . . . That last day was one thing she hadn't forgotten.

Sometimes she spoke a little proudly of the special Mass for her (the priest spoke her name right out in church), and the big dinner with all her friends, and her mother crying, and the drinking so late she scarcely got any sleep at all. And then in the morning——

She could still see the road out of the village. At every door, every farm, people were out to wish her Godspeed. "Remember," one said, "if you see my boy in Cleveland——" Another: "Look for Stanislaw in Baltimore, Maryland," and Mrs. Kobiec handed her a sweater for Kazimierz in a cold town called Buffalo.

"Yes, yes," Mother cried, "I will speak to them all——"

She didn't look back, though she knew her family were in sight and weeping. If she had, it would have been as though she were never going to see them again. She took the old bag up under her arm. It was only thirty miles to Lwow, and Mother could walk it easily.

"Look, Ma," said Felicia. "If you'd only *try* to remember——"

Mother frowned. "Well," she said dubiously, "perhaps there was—something, yes——"

At Lwow she had taken the train to Warsaw, and there began the enormous ride across the plains to Hamburg. It was at Hamburg, on the ship, that she met the woman from Galicia.

This woman was old and ill and frightened. The Austrians had taken her son into the army and the only other was in Massachusetts. The mills there were like the mills in Galicia, the son wrote. The pay was good but the food high. Many mills were in that country. Mother could hardly understand the woman, she spoke such peculiar Polish.

When the ship was nearing New York, someone began talk-

ing—oh, now she remembered—about a statue in the harbor. All crowded with much excitement near the rail, for the smell of land was in the air. But just as they came in, the woman from Galicia was very sick on the port deck and Mother remained to help her. The statue must have been on the other side.

"Oh," Felicia cried, "then I won't have anything to tell the English class!"

Mother put her feet back into the bucket.

5

Mother met Jan Zielinski at a wedding, two months after her arrival. They had three dances—a scandalous number—and walked back together to the street where Mother had a room (without heat) in an attic. She liked this Zielinski at once because he talked so well but so little. At last he did ask where she came from.

"Złociew."

"Złociew!" She remembered how his tawny head whirled towards her in the gaslight. "I came from Manajuw!"

The towns were ten miles apart. They were married in May, on a Saturday. On Monday Mother went back to the mill.

She and Jan believed that in a while they would have enough money to buy a little farm to work, as people did in the old country. Jan spent his evenings sketching plans—a barn here, a pigsty there, here a little house with flowers in front. But Felicia came and the twins, Mother was never through with the mill, Father never had his farm to tend.

Felicia could hardly remember him—only one day of his life was quite clear to her. Mostly he was a nondescript figure moving vaguely in the background of her childhood—a mute, tired face at weekday supper table; a strangely exuberant voice outside her door on Saturday nights; a sleepy little man,

Sundays, on a bench in the park. The park was what Felicia loved. Mother sat watching the twins, Stefan and Stanislaw, while Felicia launched matches into the millpond. These were ships, bound for Hawaii or Pago Pago or some other name in the blue geography.

When the sun fell below the trees, the Zielinskis started leisurely home. Just outside the park, a couple named Manning had a little stand where they sold pork pies. Felicia was permitted to buy a pie for herself and one for the twins to share. Even more than the pie, she liked listening to the Mannings. They were from England, and spoke in a funny way. Many people here were from England; most had come to work in the mills, but the Mannings had come to sell pork pies. Afterwards, at home, Father would open a bottle of home brew, while Mother watched him with a quiet smile. Felicia wished those Sundays would never end.

Or sometimes in winter they would go to Father's club. The Polish National Alliance held its meetings in Kosciuszko Hall—afterwards Felicia never read the name, Kosciuszko, without recalling the anaesthetic odor of live and dead cigars.

She was charged with care of the twins, who had a habit of crawling among the folding chairs, but after twenty minutes fell asleep. Then she could listen to the club. The nominations, the elections, the resolutions were to her incomprehensible. Father's face was dull, inert. He never said a word in meeting or stood for office. But when it was time for speeches—oh, that was when Father woke up!

Each speaker said the same things. *Poland will never die. The tyrants of Europe can never cross her borders again. Thrice divided and overrun, her soul lives on in the souls of her people. Her name—her glorious history, the very language—was outlawed, and yet her name persisted in the homes and churches of all Poland. And now she will live forever. Pilsudski! Paderewski! Veelson! They gave her back to*

us! And we in America, who have never lived in a free Poland——

Felicia glanced at Father. His face was bright with pride, his eyes with tears, his mouth moving as though he too were saying the words. Each speaker was equally applauded. At the end, all stood up to sing *Jeszcze Polska Nie Zginyła.* Father sang in a low tone, off key.

One day—the day of his life Felicia remembered best—he came home carrying two queer-looking papers. His voice trembled with excitement.

"Bonds!" he exclaimed, "Polish bonds!" and he glanced trepidantly at Mother, for it was she who managed the finances.

Mother stared at the queer papers.

"I took the money from the bank, and Komar got them for me."

"But," Mother whispered, "two hundred dollars!"

"It's all right, *kobietka.*" Father rubbed his hands together. His face had that old proud look Felicia had seen during speeches. "Mature in 1940, you see? By then, Poland will be a great strong nation. We will be rich! We will buy more bonds."

Mother shook her head wearily. Felicia could see that she wanted to berate Father, but he was so happy she found it impossible. All that afternoon—it was Saturday—he sang Polish songs as he worked painting chairs for the twins.

Father liked painting. Unlike the mill, where he merely tended a loom, it gave him pride in his hands. Before supper he had a glass of home brew. He went out for his night at the club, still singing. He would stand around at the bar, and pretty soon someone would notice him, ask him how things went, and Father could say calmly, "Well, I picked up a couple of Polish bonds today——" Then everyone would have a drink on that.

Mother had to laugh to see him go. She called after him, "Come back on your feet." Father grinned, and waved his hand. . . .

It was six minutes past ten. Felicia had just glanced at the clock to see how long she'd been studying since Father left. Someone seemed to be banging on the kitchen door. Banging furiously. A Polish voice screaming, "*Pani Zielinska!*"

It was Mrs. Urban. Mother took a single look at her anguished face and ran towards the Avenue. Mrs. Urban puffed along beside Felicia.

"Automobile—hit your father. Going for—oysters. My man—not hurt." Felicia pictured her father lying alone in the road, broken, in a pool of blood.

There was no blood and no Father. Took him to the hospital, someone said. A ring of sympathetic faces circled Felicia. Abruptly she began to cry. A dark face leaned from a car and said, "Give you a lift, if you want."

Felicia never knew who the man was. She sat beside her mother in the rear seat and thought wretchedly of Father. Now he would have to stay in bed, perhaps for weeks if his leg was broken. Father wouldn't like that. She would go to the library for Polish books and . . .

A quick worry came: *If he can't work, if Mother can't earn enough, if I have to leave school.* . . . And oh, she'd be very nice to Father.

The man stopped his car in the hospital driveway. Mother ran up to the first door she saw. It was locked; she banged. A woman in white came down the corridor shaking her head angrily, gesturing towards the right. Felicia and her mother went down the stairs and along the sidewalk and up the stairs before another door. Mother pushed through it and into the hospital. She had been utterly silent since she left the house. Now she cried out: "*Gdzie jest* my husband?"

A tall nurse swept down the corridor. "Quiet!" she ordered. "I must ask——"

"*Gdzie jest* my husband?"

The nurse glared.

Felicia said, "I'm sorry. My mother doesn't understand. My father—Zielinski—was brought here. An accident. Could you——?"

The nurse turned away. She swaggered down a long corridor to a desk. Felicia saw a nurse at the desk look up, look down at her records, up again. The tall nurse walked slowly back.

She walked past Mrs. Zielinski to Felicia. Her eyes shifted uneasily. "I'm sorry," she said. "He's been taken to the morgue."

Felicia stared at her.

The nurse said clumsily, "You knew, of course——"

Felicia felt only surprise. She had always heard that people were stunned, or fainted, or screamed. She nodded, took her mother's arm. They went out through the heavy doors. . . . Mother spoke with a sort of quiet impatience.

"When will we see him?" she said.

Felicia turned, startled. Her mother's eyes were bright with confidence. Then, only then, did Felicia realize that her mother did not know the meaning of the English word morgue, and that she would have to tell her.

6

After the funeral, Mother took off the black hat, the black veil, the threadbare black coat. "Now we must work."

Felicia looked at her curiously. These were nearly the first words her mother had spoken in two days. There had been outcries, shrieks, wails, but not from Mother.

"Yes, Ma."

"That Komar." The name was a curse in her mouth. "Said I should go for Widow's Aid. Widow's Aid! Living on the town."

"Ma—did he leave anything?"

No bitterness was in her mother's voice. "Yes. Five hundred dollars to bury him with. Two Polish bonds. And me. And you. And twins. . . . That Komar," she repeated. Her lean body straightened. "Widow's Aid, the jackass."

"He meant it for the best, Ma."

"Yes, surely. But without knowing me—or you, the jackass."

"We can get along."

"Yes. Work." Mother stared down at her red, cut hands. Felicia wondered if she would ever see a day when her mother wouldn't work. "Begin now, and slice up the carrots," said Mother.

That was in the summer between her junior and senior years. When she went back to high school she felt no different —except when she remembered Father, except when she thought of college. College would be impossible now without a scholarship.

That was not impossible. Two excellent grants were made annually by the Women's Club, one to a boy, one to a girl. In recent years these had been automatically given to the winners of the high school senior class awards for scholarship and leadership. From the day of her father's death, Felicia knew what she was after.

She had always had good marks, but now she must have better. She must work harder, harder—even on algebra, even on chemical equations, even on *Moby Dick.*

Once in September, in English, when there was nothing better to say, she asked: "Miss Parrish, just why do we have to read it?"

"*Moby Dick,*" Miss Parrish said, as though she had it mem-

orized, "is not only one of our greatest American novels. It is also very intimately connected with the early history of this community, as you know. It is required reading partly because it deals with the early life of our own people."

Not of my people, Felicia thought suddenly. *No, nor of Cecile St. Andre's or Pete Zonak's or Joe Sylvia's. Why, if you took nine tenths of the kids in this room——*

But arguing with teachers was a luxury she was now willing to forego. She beamed brightly at Miss Parrish.

The discussion dragged on. Felicia followed it anxiously, seeking to redeem herself with Miss Parish. What, the teacher asked, was the process by which a whale was caught? Felicia shot her hand up.

"Well, first the man up in the lookout would sight it. Then they'd set out in dories——"

The tall young man in the second row seemed to be afflicted suddenly with a choking fit.

Felicia gave him a single indignant glance. Miss Parrish noticed him, too, and said, "Isn't that right, Mr. Standler?"

Gravely, politely, Mr. Standler stood up. "Well, yes. Except that they weren't dories, really. They were whaleboats."

"It's the very same thing," Felicia said hotly.

Standler turned. He had little crinkles around his eyes and his eyes seemed to smile at her too. An electric warmth flooded down Felicia's body from her neck to her legs. She didn't know what the boy said after that.

Oh, damn, I would have to wear this mousy brown today.

That night she made an entry in her diary for the first time since she was a sophomore. She had found it in a bottom drawer, wrapped in her first pair of real silk pants.

> I've noticed him before but not much because he's terribly quiet. His first name is Mark. That seems to fit him somehow. He dresses all right, but not like a sheik, like some of the others. He must live downtown somewhere, because I've

certainly never seen him in the North End or I'd have remembered him.

That seemed awfully dopy. She sat and looked at it, clicking the fancy lock that didn't work. She went on conscientiously:

We had a quiz in history today and I got A minus. Miss Willard gave me C on my experiment. I don't think I'll ever be able to do that awful chem.

She undressed, and turned out the light. In the dark, in her pajamas, she wrote:

I think he's wonderful.

She encountered Mark Standler next in the lunchroom. Almost literally she ran into him, but she wasn't sure he would speak. She looked down at his tray—he had a ham sandwich, a tuna roll and a bottle of milk—but that didn't seem polite. When she looked up he was grinning. "How's the dory?"

"Oh." Felicia laughed. "Oh, all right, thanks."

She was still laughing. She thought she had never heard anything so humorous.

On Saturday, at the football game, she couldn't help noticing the way the boys looked at her. They had never paid her much attention before and she couldn't understand it now, because to herself she looked the same; certainly she was no better dressed. All her clothes, in fact, seemed rather small for her.

Even O'Mara noticed her. He was running toward the field in his football suit, but when he saw Felicia he stopped dead. "Hi, kid."

Felicia stared at him coldly. His confident eyes roamed over her body, the wide grin never left his face. *Oh, well,* thought Felicia, *I feel pretty good today.*

"Hello."

Then the other girls wouldn't let her alone. "Do you really know him? Isn't he marvelous? Did he ever ask you out? . . ." "If he does," Joan Urban said meaningfully, "you'd better sit on his hands." . . . "Remember how he hurt his head in the Thanksgiving game and had to stay out of school? Wasn't it awful? Isn't he cute?" . . .

"Nuts," said Felicia.

But O'Mara was having a good day. Down on the field he seemed small beside the other boys, but he was obviously tough and no one else could run as fast as he. He made five or six long gains and intercepted a pass for a touchdown. In the final period he twisted an ankle, was led off the field. He ripped the helmet from his auburn head and slammed it regretfully on the turf. The crowd stood up and cheered. Felicia looked around for Mark Standler.

He didn't seem to be there today, but on Monday she met him going into English.

"How's the dory?" he asked, and Felicia answered, "Fine. How's your whaleboat?" They laughed looking into each other's eyes and it was a private joke between them.

That night she wrote:

> I met X again today. [X she let represent Mark Standler, for fear someone might look into her diary.] He was wearing a pretty old sweater and crepe shoes and yet he's every bit a gentleman. I wish I knew more about him.
>
> What a difference between boys. Between X and # [that was Stephen O'Mara] for example.
>
> I got a B in chemistry.

She slid her clothes off slowly, before the mirror. *Oh, I'm a big girl,* she thought breathlessly, *big and round in the right places but not too much so. I'd look just like one of those nudes you see in the art books, reclining on the grass, if I had time to recline. If there were any grass.* . . . She laughed at her-

self in the mirror, and slid her nightdress over her body, and went to bed.

On Friday she was talking with Joan Urban in front of the school as Standler came out the door, swinging his books in a green cloth bag. "How's the dory?"

"Still afloat." She was smiling, looking after him, and suddenly she saw how beautiful the day was. The trees on County Street were green and gold, the air was clean, the sun was warm, Mark Standler looked nice in flannel trousers. Joan was saying, "So we've got a new boyfriend."

"I wonder who he is."

"My God, I thought you knew him."

"Oh, his name. But not much else. Why haven't I noticed him before?"

"He went to St. Paul's before this year. Had a touch of infantile paralysis once, I guess, but he came out of it pretty good." Joan looked at her curiously. "You mean to say you don't know *who* he is?"

"No."

"For Pete's sake—you ever hear of the Standlers? Standler Road? Standler Memorial Library? Standler Mills?"

"You mean he's that——"

"Sure. He's Mark Standler II! His grandfather—Mark I—was the guy that started the mills. Say, everyone knows that! How'd you happen to get chummy with him, anyhow?"

"Oh, I had an argument with him in English. Something about whaling."

"My God!" Joan moaned. "Something about whaling. He only comes from one of the oldest whaling families in town."

"That's all right." Felicia began to giggle. No wonder Mark Standler had thought her a big joke. "*He* never caught one, did he?"

It was too much to write in her diary. She sat at the red-

and-white checked kitchen table and stared at her chemistry book, which said: $R.NH_2 + HNO_2 = R.OH + H_2O + N_2$.

She was seeing herself with Mark Standler. They were on the beach, there was a boat, and he was saying, "I want to show you where my folks caught whales." And she said, "That will be nice," and then they were in the boat, he rowing. She sat in the stern, smiling at him. "This is a fine dory." "Yes," said he, "a mighty good whaleboat." Then they were laughing, looking into each other's eyes, and a warm electric glow was over her——

"If you're not doing anything," Mother said, "there's the chicken to be cleaned and the sink and you were going to empty the swill tonight—remember?"

7

For always there was work to be done. When Mother worked from six in the morning to three in the afternoon, Felicia got breakfast for herself and the twins. When she worked from one to ten, Felicia prepared the evening dinner. And on any day, at any hour, Mother needed help, since the mill took so much of her time.

Saturdays were busiest. After the football season they were nearly all alike. At midnight, sitting up in bed, her back throbbing with a hundred pains, Felicia began in her diary:

> I got up at seven. Cleaned my room and changed the bed. Mopped all the floors. Dusted. Got the twins' breakfast and did the dishes. Swept down the back stairs. Left the twins with Mrs. St. Andre while doing the errands. I think it's awful the way prices go up. Ma came home. Got lunch, did the dishes. In the afternoon we waxed the parlor floor and hung up the new curtains. Did the floor in Ma's room and helped her change the bed. We got supper—*gołąbki,* very nice. Afterwards I worked on my new blouse. . . .

And in the morning she would wake and find herself still sitting there, with the diary near her hand.

Of all her chores she liked sewing the best. She could make shirts and blouses, her mother dresses and even, once, a coat. But neither she nor Mother could manufacture shoes and stockings, and the lower part of her always seemed shabbier than the top. "It's too bad," she whispered, twisting to look at her back in the mirror, "I have such pretty legs——"

Her mouth straightened bitterly. *Some day I'll have seven pairs of shoes. And fourteen pairs of stockings. Two a day——*

At school, every other girl seemed to own more clothes than Gloria Swanson. Once in the locker room Fatty Baker asked, "Where'd you buy the skirt, Phil?" Felicia couldn't see anything wrong with it. "My mother sewed it." Fatty smiled triumphantly, condescendingly. "Why, you'd never know it." Next time, Felicia was ready for her. "This blouse? . . . Oh, it's custom made."

It was partly because of her clothes problem that she took the job in the five-and-ten during Christmas week. After Mother took most of her wages to buy food, she still had the price of a pair of stockings. Then the manager asked her to work every Saturday. Most of the time that was fun, since a number of girls from school worked with her. They gossiped about school, about the customers, about the boys who dropped in to see them. (Once Felicia saw Steve O'Mara over near hardware; she hid down behind the counter till he went past; the manager caught her and asked her what did she think she was, an ostrich? The other girls laughed as though they'd die.)

The work itself was no harder than what she'd otherwise do at home, though by six o'clock her feet began to ache. By ten, when she started home, she was too weary even to notice whether or not the drunks on the streetcar were trying to pick her up. Usually they were.

Each Saturday she earned three dollars.

In her house there was never enough money. She saved fifteen box covers and wrote a jingle praising breakfast food. Nothing came of it. She answered an advertisement promising easy money in ten days and received fifty boxes of smelly soap to peddle. She sent them back. Then the evening paper began a crossword puzzle contest, first prize one hundred dollars. Felicia wrote in her diary, "I've got to win, I can win, I *must*," and went to work with a fury.

The puzzles were harder than she'd anticipated. She took them to school and used the big dictionary in English class. She discussed them with her classmates, her teachers, her colleagues in the five-and-ten.

"Oh, I just must," she whispered, thumbing desperately through the sheaf of puzzles, one of which had to be mailed each night before twelve. A difficulty was that almost no one in her own neighborhood could help her. One evening she had the day's contest completed—except for a three-letter word meaning *infinity*. Her mother couldn't read English. Nor could Mr. or Mrs. Cieslak or Mrs. St. Andre upstairs. Cecile was out. Next door, the Gorczycas, the Sikorskis— She went to call on Mr. Sikorski.

He was sitting at the kitchen table, with the Polish-language newspaper propped against the lamp and a Polish-English dictionary before him.

"Sometimes I do it the other way," he said, gesturing apologetically towards the lamp. "The English paper with the English-Polish dictionary. It is hard."

"I know." Felicia took the chair he brought. It seemed impolite to ask him about the puzzle at the very beginning. "How is Mrs. Sikorski?"

"Fine." Mr. Sikorski nodded gratefully. "She will be back soon, if you'll wait. And Stanley, he is making good money in Pittsburgh." Suddenly his little eyes brightened. He reached under his book and proudly brought forth a letter.

"Oh, from your brother Anzelm."

"Yes. From the old country. Here, read."

Felicia could see that it was a real old-country letter.

> I am beginning this letter with the words: "Praised be Jesus Christ," and I hope that you will answer: "For centuries of centuries. Amen."
>
> First I greet you, dear brother Adam, and I trust that you are well in your new home. Next I bow to your wife Zofia, and to your son Stanislaw and little Michal. I greet them all with much love, though I have never seen them.
>
> I am pleased with what you say about America. I am glad you find it the best and happiest home you have ever known, and that you would like me to go there too. This you have said many times. Still, what should I do there? What would be my work? . . .

"You see," Mr. Sikorski smiled, "he's worrying about work. There's plenty work."

Felicia nodded. "Why, you'll be a foreman, after you learn English, won't you? You could get him a job in the mill."

"No, no—Anzelm has been to school, he is too smart for the mill. So are you, Felicia. What is that paper you have now?"

Felicia was glad he noticed it, lest he go on talking endlessly about the Sikorski family. "A puzzle. Do you think you could help me, Mr. Sikorski? All I need is a three-letter word—see, right here."

Mr. Sikorski took the paper. Painfully, he translated: "Infeenity."

"Infinity."

"Infinity." He said it again, carefully, "Infinity." He frowned at the paper. He picked up his glasses thoughtfully, focused them on the mysterious word. He turned the paper over to the other side. Seeing no help there, he turned it back again. "Well——"

He picked up his English-Polish dictionary and thumbed with cracked fingers through it. "That is spelled——?"

"With an *i*."

"With an *i*." Mr. Sikorski coasted gently through the *g*'*s* and *h*'*s*. "Ah, the *i*."

He ran his thumb up and down the pages. Once he hesitated, with thumb poised—and went on. He thumbed frantically backwards. He turned to Felicia, and his eyes were wretched.

"It is not here."

"Oh, that's all right, don't bother."

"I cannot understand——"

"Don't bother, but thank you. Good night." And she ran out quickly, because she didn't want Mr. Sikorski to worry about it. But when she went past the window she saw him with his chin in his hands and his elbows on the table, still staring unbelievingly at his book.

In the end she won an honorable mention and one dollar. Mr. Sikorski thought her marvelous.

"It's only a dollar, Mr. Sikorski!"

"It's more. It means you're smart. You work hard. You will never go in the mill."

"No," said Felica, "I shouldn't want to do that."

For "the mill"—there were several—was the threat, the bogey, the terror. A child who skipped school, or wouldn't study his lessons, or neglected to wash behind his ears, would surely end up in the mill. Unless you got ahead somehow—went to college, went to night school, opened a store—you would find yourself forever in the mill. If you had to say your brother worked in the mill, you did so apologetically, with a little laugh.

It was the mill that took Felicia's mother fresh and smiling in the morning, and returned her stumbling with weariness at night. It was the mill that dulled even Mr. Sikorski's eyes. If you had a white collar job like Komar's, all right, but otherwise—— It was the mill that kept you alive, and left you Sundays to live in.

One day in April, when the first birds were singing, Felicia's mother came home from work with blood on her dress. She went at once to her room, threw herself on the bed and began to weep.

"Ma!"

"Go away," her mother said.

Felicia ran up the back stairs to the St. Andres'. Cecile and her mother were in the kitchen; her mother's face was the color of Portuguese bread.

"What happened at the mill?"

Cecile shrugged. "She won't tell."

"Come on," said Felicia.

They hurried down the stairs and across the yard to the next tenement. Mrs. Sikorski was slicing sausage.

"The mill?" She hacked at the meat as though she'd murder it. "You are too young."

"Come," said Felicia.

Joan Urban tiptoed out of her mother's kitchen. "Just wait a minute," she grinned, "I'll get it out of her." When she came back the grin was gone.

Mrs. Gorczyca had begun work at six in the morning. When she left the looms at three, she walked with care, as usual, because of the embryo within her. But someone had dropped a cigarette wrapper at the head of the stairs, and it was enough to upset Mrs. Gorczyca. She rolled over and over, down the granite, steel-treaded steps to the next landing. Felicia's mother was there to help, and Cecile's, and now at the hospital they said she would not die. But that which would have been her child burst out of her; blood and flesh and bits of tissue were all over the stairs.

Suddenly, for no reason, Felicia wondered what Mark Standler would have said if he had been there to see it.

8

So now it was spring, and in one day the buds flowered on the long avenue of trees running past the high school and past Mark Standler's house, which had a sort of piazza on the roof. There were no trees on Felicia's street.

Spring was no time for study, yet she must study harder than ever. Within a few weeks the senior class would be nominating three boys and three girls for the scholarship and leadership awards. From each group, the faculty would elect one. Now in the last term it was clear that Felicia's only rivals for the award—and for the Women's Club scholarship—were Florence Moss and Betty Goguen. Florence was of superb scholarship, but an inconquerable shyness had kept her from many extra-curricular accomplishments. Betty, on the contrary, was a charming person to whom popularity came easy; so did her studies. Betty's parents worked in the mills, and she like Felicia knew that her only hope of college was in the girls' award. It would be a fight to the death with Betty Goguen.

Among the boys the choice seemed easier. There were Phil Henry and Stephen O'Mara and Jim Cousins. But there was also Joe Sylvia. After Joe the rest were nowhere. Joe Sylvia was stocky, near-sighted, homely. He had won an honor mark in every high school subject including English, which was never spoken in his home. Twice against his protests he had been elected treasurer of the class. But whenever there was any inglorious task, like selling dance tickets or soliciting advertisements for the school paper, Joe was glad to do it. Every morning his desk was surrounded by students anxious to have him puzzle out their French or trig or Latin. Joe Sylvia helped them with a grin.

Next to herself, Felicia wanted him to win. It was a Friday in May, a cold drizzle drifted up Union Street from the sea,

it was second period, she was wearing her beige dress—when she first realized Joe mightn't win.

Steve O'Mara blocked her way into the study hall. "Nice day, kid."

"For ducks."

O'Mara grinned. He ran his hand in mock confusion through his auburn hair. "You slay me with them *bon mots*. How about a date tonight?"

Felicia tried not to look excited—and failed. She lifted her eyebrows, the way Corinne Griffith did.

"No, thanks." . . . In the study hall, she saw him passing a note to Shirley Farren, and assumed he was asking her the same question.

After school she saw him hanging around the corridor with Pearl Mason. In the morning he walked to school with two other girls. Then it came to her—at once.

She found Joe Sylvia in the chemistry lab. "Joe, you'd better wake up. Steve O'Mara's out after the award—he's going around kissing people."

Joe squinted at her. "You want me to do the same?"

"No. You couldn't."

"What, then?"

"I don't know. I—I'll keep an eye on him."

It wasn't hard to do. He was everywhere, talking to everybody, grinning. Everybody's pal. "Still," Felicia told herself firmly, "he simply can't do it without good marks. And he *can't* get enough good marks just in one term, after loafing for years——"

And yet, she knew, O'Mara was no dumbbell. He could be bright when he tried. She saw him after school talking to Miss Parrish; chatting with Miss Willard; visiting especially Miss Foss, of mathematics. Miss Foss was an intense, nervous, busty person who just loved to have the boys come in for help. Some of the girls expressed confidentially the opinion that Miss Foss had hot pants.

O'Mara also played baseball. His position was center field, and all balls hit to his sector seemed out of his reach—almost. O'Mara caught them in his fingertips—over his head, off his shoe-tops, to the right, to the left. Whenever he got a hit, someone was on base to score. Whenever he was put out, it didn't matter. So it seemed to Felicia.

The students were to nominate their choices for the awards on Tuesday. On Monday, O'Mara passed her a note in the library:

How about going to the Prom with me?

Felicia was so angry she only half noticed just what he was inviting her to.

I wouldn't vote for you if you took me to the Copley Plaza.

Then as she was sliding the paper across the table she realized: *The Prom! The Junior Prom! If Mark doesn't ask me to that——*

O'Mara wrote back:

I don't get it. If I take you to the Prom, it won't be votes I'll be looking for.

Felicia scribbled furiously:

Get this: No! No! *No*!

All right [O'Mara answered] think it over if you want. Take your time. I can wait.

That afternoon the baseball team played Durfee, a traditional rival. Mark Standler was there—at St. Paul's he had been a javelin thrower, and the high school had no javelins—and for two innings, before his crowd dragged him away, he sat beside Felicia talking about nothing. Still she couldn't enjoy the afternoon. Steve O'Mara was all over the field; the fans screamed at his slightest endeavor.

In the ninth inning, with Durfee a run behind, one of their

batters drove a ball far into center. O'Mara glided backwards, turned around and sprinted, his back to the diamond, leaped, thrust up one hand. Some declared it the grandest catch ever made on that field, though a few were heard to suggest that O'Mara must have misjudged the ball slightly, since he had not seemed to start after it at once.

The next morning the students voted.

After the voting, O'Mara was waiting for her at the study hall. "How about it?"

Felicia stared at him. "Wait a minute," she said slowly. "The nominations are over, and you're still asking me to the Prom?"

"I don't get the double-talk, but that's the idea."

Felicia felt like a fool. *Golly*, she thought, *I've wronged the boy. If he didn't get sore now he must really like me*:

"How about waiting till the Monday before?"

Reluctantly, O'Mara nodded.

Everywhere she went she was seeking Mark Standler. He was with her in the lunchroom, in the corridor after English, on the broad lawn at three o'clock. Even Joan Urban had to admit he was charming.

He had walked with them both down the steep hill which was William Street; he was going to the library, they to the streetcar line. Felicia could sense the hostility in Joan when she introduced him to her. By the time he waved good-by, at the corner of William and Pleasant, before the Whaleman statue, Joan was bubbling with friendliness.

"Isn't he swell!"

Felicia nodded quietly.

Dark suspicion returned suddenly to Joan's eyes. "That mug ever offer to take you out?"

"Well, no." Felicia frowned. Why were some people so mean? "Maybe he's just—waiting."

"For what?"

Felicia hesitated. If she said anything about the Prom now,

she knew, she might be jinxed. She said, smiling, "A dead whale or a stove boat—that's my motto."

Joan stared. "For God's sake, what are you driving at, anyhow?" But Felicia climbed into the streetcar with a laugh and without answering, and sat down beside a Cape Verde Negress.

That Saturday, on her way to the five-and-ten, she saw a bolt of white organdy in the window of a mill-end shop. She telephoned to the St. Andres and asked Mrs. St. Andre to tell Mother to look at it on her shopping tour. Mother said she could make a gown out of that—yes.

In two weeks? Maybe.

On Monday—a week before the last Monday, when she'd have to give O'Mara his answer—the practice sessions started in the gym. Here students had a chance to polish their dancing for the Prom. Some who couldn't dance at all tried to learn, to the music of a phonograph. Mark Standler danced with her three times. That night she wrote in her diary:

> It's funny, his bad leg doesn't seem to interfere with his dancing at all. And it never occurs to you to be sorry for Mark Standler.
>
> I could dance with him forever.
>
> Ma says I'll like the dress. I think he'll like it.

On Tuesday Standler danced with her twice. On Wednesday he wasn't there. On Thursday he went straight to her as soon as the music began; ever afterwards, she remembered that song and the rhythm.

> Bumpty-da-dum, bumpty-da-dum,
> This is how we do the Varsity Drag.*

Mark said, "I had to see you, about the Prom——"

Felicia mumbled, her heart in her mouth. "Yes." *Oh, lovely song!* Her feet moved with a wild exultation to the music.

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"I wanted to ask you to it. Something—something came up so I couldn't." Mark Standler's mouth tightened nervously. He was wearing an old blue tie, knit. He seemed to be having a hard time. "I wanted you to understand. That I did want to take you. So you'd understand."

Felicia could say nothing. The phonograph screeched. *This is how we do the Varsity Drag.** Ever afterwards, she hated that song. . . . "Oh, of course, that's all right, sure," she said. She prayed to God she wouldn't burst into tears or even turn pale. She felt hurt and proud and martyred, like Joan of Arc, like Marie Antoinette, like that other queen in the other story. Twice she stepped on his feet. She prayed to God he wouldn't think she was doing it on purpose.

That miserable dance was over sooner than she'd dared hope. She hung around for half an hour, so that no one would suspect anything, and walked all the way home in a rainstorm driving up from the sea.

Her mother said, "The gown is done. Try it on."

On Friday, ahead of time, O'Mara was waiting. "How about it?" Felicia answer meekly, "I'll be glad to go if you want me." *What the hell book had she read that in?* O'Mara grabbed her and tried to kiss her, right there in the study hall, while Miss Housman looked shocked to death.

Her mother seemed puzzled, when Felicia perfunctorily asked her consent. "What is his name?"

"O'Mara. Stephen O'Mara."

"His parents, who are they?"

"Gosh, I don't know." Felicia giggled, "Mr. and Mrs. O'Mara, I suppose."

Her mother frowned, looking down at the stocking she was darning—Mother's hands were always busy. "That is not a Polish name."

"No."

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"Surely there are enough Polish boys you could go with?"

"Ma!" Felicia remembered what the books said, what had been agreed on in civics class. "Ma, this is America!" It did sound a little strange, said in Polish.

On the streetcar she conferred with Joan Urban. Joan had accepted an invitation from Bert Sullivan. "Did your mother say anything about going with Bert?"

Joan looked at her quickly. "Yes."

"Aren't there enough Polish boys you could go with?"

Joan nodded. "Exactly." She stared out the window. "Well, if they think we've necessarily got to marry a Polack——"

Afterwards Felicia remembered just how the stores looked going by on the Avenue, and the worn seat of the streetcar, and Joan's pale, earnest face as she made the promise. "Joan, promise we'll stick together."

"You mean, and go out with any boys we want, Polish or not?"

"Yes."

Joan held out her hand.

Felicia sighed with relief. "Not that I'd ever think of marrying Steve O'Mara."

"You could do worse," Joan asserted; "you could do worse."

The other girls seemed to have the same notion. Felicia could feel the envy in their looks as she walked into the Prom with him. *Don't worry, kids,* her mind responded, *here he is and you can have him.* Every time she paused before someone in the receiving line, O'Mara ran his fingers up and down her back.

Not counting him, she was glad she had come. The hall itself, the State Armory, was not and could not be beautiful, though with crepe paper and potted flowers the decorating committee had done its best. Beauty came from the gowns, of mauve and cerise and cobalt and jade and just plain white—white, white, white, so many of white. Felicia was glad, not sorry. *It's our color,* she thought—to Mark Standler she might

have said it—*because we're young and fresh and our whole world is before us. . . .*

Everyone seemed to rush towards her and O'Mara as they left the receiving line, and her program was filled in five minutes.

It was after the second dance that she saw Mark. At first she could believe he was alone, but when the dancers separated a girl remained beside him.

She was slender and tall and her face looked a little strained, a little old. *She's haughty*, Felicia thought. *No, proud is a fairer word. And in her own way she is very pretty.*

Mark came over at once. "This is Miss Brimmer," and he added, as though it were part of her name, "of Boston. . . . Couldn't we swap a dance?"

O'Mara put his hand up on Mark's shoulder. "Sorry, pal," he said with no sorrow, "the little book is full." Felicia thought she heard Miss Brimmer give a tiny sigh of relief but she kept her eyes on Mark.

"I am sorry," she said, "really sorry."

Mark grinned at her. *Oh*, she thought, *he's simply got to believe it.* She smiled back at him so widely she thought her mouth might rip. *He's got to believe I really want to dance with him and it's all right for him to drag that girl instead of me.* Then the band swung loudly into *I'm Just a Vagabond Lover** and Joe Sylvia, looking terribly funny and uncomfortable in a blue coat and white trousers, came over to claim his dance. Felicia twisted her neck around and kept smiling back at Mark.

After that the Prom was just so-so. The grand march was pretty but the floor was always too crowded for real dancing. O'Mara was witty and jovial; quite witty, quite jovial. Felicia understood why, when she saw him ducking out the door every few minutes. She could smell his breath.

"Rye?"

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O'Mara nodded solemnly. "Three bucks a pint. Imagine that! They land it off a boat ten miles from here and it's still three bucks a pint."

"How old are you?" Felicia said. O'Mara began to laugh.

After the last dance he took her to a diner for hamburgers. The diner, on a bridge at the mouth of the river, was full of evening gowns and white coats. It was so much fun that even O'Mara was satisfied, though he had wanted to drive out on the Cape to a speakeasy. Felicia had said no, her mother would kill her, and O'Mara hadn't liked it.

He seemed to remember his grouch, after he stopped in the park on the way home and tried to kiss her. Felicia struggled away. "Please. Not here."

So O'Mara tried again in front of her house, reaching out expertly and dragging her towards him. Felicia thought, *Oh, well, I suppose it won't kill me.* But before she could turn her face to him he was sliding his hand down across her breast. Felicia shoved him, hard.

"For Christ's sake," said O'Mara, "what do I have to do to get a kiss?"

"You might try acting like a gentleman."

"Yeah, like Standler, I suppose. I suppose he gets all he wants."

"Nobody asked you to mention him."

"So you thought he was going to take you to the Prom. As though Mark the Two would ever ask a little P——" He seemed to choke on the word. Felicia stared at him.

"What," she asked softly, "what were you going to say?"

O'Mara was silent.

Gently, Felicia insisted. "Was it, by any chance—Polack?"

"O.K.: sure."

"So that's why you think he wouldn't take me. And is that also why you thought you could have a field day with me?"

He turned his head quickly. Felicia gave him no chance to answer. She twisted her body to the right, winding up, and swung her arm stiff with her hand open into his face.

The blow still seemed to resound as she strode toward her house. She felt like cursing and she felt like tears. Chiefly she thought: *Mark, I don't believe it. I won't believe it. Never.* . . . She ripped O'Mara's corsage off and flung it in the general direction of the Sikorskis' garbage can.

Lights struck her when she opened the door. Around the kitchen table where Mr. and Mrs. Sikorski, Mr. Gorczyca, Mr. and Mrs. Urban, Mrs. Albecki, her mother. They were eating *pierogi* and drinking home brew. They had been talking Polish when she came in, but now Mr. Sikorski said, "Good evening, Felicia," and Mrs. Albecki, "Oh, how pretty!"

"*Dobry wieczór,*" said Felicia. "*Przyjemnie powitania razem.*"

They beamed at her and went on talking. Felicia sat near the stove. Mr. Sikorski caught her eye and smiled. "My brother thinks he may come." "Oh, good!" She smiled back at him. She looked around the room; there was no one here she didn't know, no one she didn't like. She reached out for a *pierogi.* Never in her life before, she thought, had anything tasted so fine.

9

Felicia wished she could see the banner. The girls in sewing class had labored over it for weeks. Now it hung resplendent above the stage. Felicia observed that many in the audience stared up at it whenever the program was dull—and it frequently was dull. She could see the banner only from its rear.

Perspiration slid down her back and between her breasts. She was so conspicuous she dared hardly move, since few

of her classmates were with her on the stage. The rest sat in the first few rows of the auditorium, beyond the potted geraniums—the boys on one side, the girls on the other.

Felicia's gaze went back to her mother. Mother was in the very first row open to the public. She had been there since seven o'clock. Her program, visibly worn, she clutched tightly in her hand. *Mostly likely*, Felicia thought, *oh, most likely the darling's holding it upside down.* Mother had not realized what it meant, when Felicia told her she was to be on the stage.

Felicia looked at her own program. This thing the orchestra was working on was *Le Talisman. Le Talisman* ended at last and Mr. Fergueson, the principal, arose.

"We come now," said Principal Fergueson, "to the award of special prizes and honors." Felicia saw her mother's tense face, her mother's hands strangling the program. "I shall ask each student to come forward as his name is called.

"The Hannah M. Schofield prize for excellence in English—Mary Domingues Madeiros. . . . The Charles Adams prize for excellence in American history—Mark Standler II."

Felicia wanted to turn her head and didn't. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see Mark limping forward.

"The girls' award for outstanding excellence in scholarship and leadership." *Oh, Mother dearest.* "Felicia Jadwiga Zielinski!"

Mother was clapping harder than anyone else. Mother was turning around to the rest of the audience, nodding, smiling, approving, like a cheer-leader. . . . "The boy's award for outstanding excellence in scholarship and leadership—Stephen John O'Mara!"

The applause came up like a roar. Down in the second row with the other boys, Joe Sylvia looked sick.

Mr. Fergueson sat down. The chairman of the school committee approached the rack which held the diplomas. These

he handed out one by one as the graduating class marched onto the stage. The chairman of the school committee stumbled over names like Toczdylowski and Przybysz, he took a long time, but Felicia didn't care. It was fun just to sit there and to see them all.

Then the chairman of the school committee began a speech. Programs waved as fans, while his voice went on and on.

"What is my advice to these young people? It is very simple. Work. Work hard. Was it not the great philosopher Henry Van Dyke who said that an honest man who is not afraid of toil need never fear the future? Take that advice into whatever business you may enter. Take that advice into whatever further studies you may pursue. I repeat: Work. Work hard. An honest man who is not afraid of toil need never fear the future.

"Let me say in conclusion that in all my years of experience I have never seen a finer group of young people than this." He paused; his voice deepened: "And let me add that it is also a mighty fine world that they're going out into. We oldsters have done our best. Now we leave it to these young men and women to carry on our work. To you we throw the torch; be yours to hold it high."

He paused again. Everyone was listening to him now.

"Perhaps it is only by paraphrasing the words of our great President that I can best describe the opportunities which lie before you:

"Yours is a land rich in resources, stimulating in its glorious beauty, filled with millions of happy homes, blessed with comfort and opportunity. In no nation are the institutions of progress more advanced. In no nation are the fruits of accomplishment more secure. . . . I have no fears for the future of our country. It is bright with hope."

The orchestra began the recessional. Row by row, the graduates marched out. Those on the stage went last. As

Felicia stepped down, she wondered if Mark Standler was looking at her; she could feel O'Mara was.

Halfway down the aisle, with everyone watching, she did what she had been afraid she'd do. She turned squarely around and took at last one good look at the banner above the stage. It was indeed striking—a carefully wrought white border, a deep red background with white letters, and the letters saying:

THE CLASS OF 1929

CAROLINE · FALL

I

WITH ALL HER HEART Caroline Standler wished this Labor Day to be a success. Far more than New Year's, to her Labor Day had always marked the end and beginning of a year. Some Labor Days she easily remembered—the day she came home from camp at Duxbury and packed again for boarding school, with her mother's large soft face close to her, telling her what girls were best to know in Boston, telling her the great and nasty Facts of Life; the day she left for Miss Bradway's in Washington; the day in her nineteenth year when she realized she would never go to school again and must now be thinking of a husband; the day her son Mark went off to St. Paul's. These she could see as clearly as she could now see the deck of the *Jenny Clinton III* beneath her, or the silhouette of Fort Rodman slipping past to starboard.

Yet she was afraid this Labor Day was not going to be a success. Down in the cabin of the *Jenny Clinton III*, Jill Standler's legs thrust out of the bunk. It was Jill's fault they were starting today and not last Saturday. Jill had finally arrived on Sunday afternoon suffering from what she termed a Christ of a hangover, had slunk wretchedly aboard the motorboat this morning, still in her pajamas, and had gone to sleep again. Caroline thought with a mild resentment, *If she were anyone else but my own husband's niece*——

She was disappointed too in Alec Marwick. She had asked

him up to meet Jill and to talk about Harvard, where he was going to teach, but he didn't seem to care much for Jill or know much about Harvard. Caroline had wanted him to meet some of the more important people—Mr. Dalyrymple of Dalyrymple Mills, Colonel Marsden—but he was always wandering out to the Whaling Museum, or up on Johnnycake Hill, or down to Dartmouth to see the *Morgan*.

When Caroline showed him the splinter off the bowsprit of the first *Jenny Clinton*—it was on the wall in Mark's room—he practically jumped with delight. Still, he was a friendly person, full of grins, even though a little queer. Perhaps that was the way people got when they lived in places like Nebraska.

She went back to the cockpit, where Alec was beside her husband. "John, aren't we a little too near the Light?"

"No, ma'am." John Standler spoke without taking his oldest pipe from his mouth or his eyes from the course. "One point more to starb'd and we'd be out of the channel. I know this harbor, Caroline."

Caroline nodded meekly. She had only asked the question because she knew he'd enjoy answering it. . . . She smiled at Alec. "Don't you love the sea?"

"I sure do."

"I'm sorry about Jill."

"All right. I don't blame her for resting. It's going to be a pretty hot day."

John agreed. On Sconticut Neck, he pointed out, the mists had already dispersed. He frowned knowingly. *Oh my,* thought Caroline, *I hope it won't be too utterly hot. Enough things have gone wrong already.* "John, I brought along your *Herald.*"

"Fine. Want to look it over, Alec?"

Alec glanced curiously at the front page. Caroline realized with a shock that he had never seen the Boston *Herald* before

in his life, even if he was her own cousin. He said, "I suppose you want to hear about the market."

"Suit yourself."

Alec thumbed through to the dull-looking financial pages. "Well—August sales on New York exchange set new record."

"I bet they did."

"Let's see. Here's Tel. and Tel.—298⅝ a share." Alec whistled softly. " 'Whom the gods wish to destroy——' General Electric, 395½, up 1½. I'm a big speculator myself. Fellow almost talked me into buying a share of Republic Steel once."

"Should have."

"Not me. I don't gamble," Alec grinned. "Just on sure things like faro or roulette. Republic was selling around 70 then."

"Look it up now."

"Ah. . . . 129, up 3⅞."

"There you are," John went on, and Caroline wished he wouldn't, because all this talk about stocks certainly confused her and was probably boring Alec. "If you'd bought ten shares you'd be five hundred ninety dollars richer today. Yesterday you'd have made—up 3⅞—oh, thirty-odd dollars without lifting a finger."

"I guess school teachers aren't supposed to get rich anyhow."

Caroline said quickly, "Mark's going to Harvard too."

"Yes?" Alec said, but John said, "If you think that's anything, look up Hocking Valley Railway."

"Well, I'll be—five hundred eighty dollars a share; up seventy dollars yesterday. It's beyond me." Alec folded the newspaper. "The ways of Babylon. . . . Where's Mark today?"

"Still at camp. He's a counselor in Ogunquit—just for the experience, not the money, of course."

"Of course," Alec said, and Caroline noticed John's face was red. It must be the wind, now that they were outside the Neck.

"He's quite grown-up now."

"Smokes and runs around with girls?"

"No," Caroline smiled, "neither, to my knowledge." She saw the men turn and watch a sloop coming up from port and heading across their bow. "There was one girl——"

She stared dreamily at the sloop, remembering Faith Brimmer. What a dear, sweet girl, though rather frail. She had studied in Switzerland, and lived in Paris too. (Her father, of course, was quite noted—not that Mark would care about that—banker, industrialist, philanthropist; *Who's Who* called him director of this, trustee of that, former overseer of Harvard College.) Sometimes boys were hard to understand.

She could still see Mark, the day he came home from high school, wearing that awful old sweater, his face flushed, and told her about the girl he was going to ask to the Junior Prom. He had even mentioned the girl's name, though Caroline never really got it. Ziglinski, or Zielowski, or some such thing. What she did get was bad enough.

Caroline smiled. It was funny. John always ribbed her for being slow-minded and it was true she never seemed to get the point of a joke very quickly, especially of a smutty one, like those Colonel Marsden told. But she had thought fast enough that day, when Mark told her about this Felicia Zabilski.

"Why, Mark," she had cried, "not the sixth. Oh, darling, that's the weekend I've asked Faith Brimmer down!"

Then it was awful, getting Faith on the phone and practically begging her to come, practically begging Mrs. Brimmer to let her come. Some day she'd tell John it was all his fault because he was the one who wanted Mark to change to a public school in the first place.

The sloop was safely past now, well to starboard on its course toward Horse Neck. Alec was saying, "Must seem a little funny, a boat like this in your family."

"Why?"

"No sails."

"Oh." John took his pipe from his mouth. "I'll tell you. You have a sailboat, you've got to have someone to help handle her. Two or three men, depending on her size. You can't just step aboard and cast off, way you can in a motorboat. Of course, when you think of it— The first *Jenny Clinton* was a whaler." He laughed. "I can handle canvas, though."

"Oh, yes," Caroline said, because she knew that was another of John's touchy spots, sensitive as he was to any intimation that he couldn't keep up the family prestige—"John's a fine yachtsman."

She was trying to think of a polite way to add that they also could afford a bigger boat, but just then Jill's voice said, "You bet he is," and here was Jill climbing out of the cabin. Caroline gasped. Jill was wearing tight slacks, a bra top that left her midriff shining white and bare, a ribbon tied around her head and little else.

"He didn't bounce me out of my cradle once," Jill said, and winked at Alec. "Hello, professor." Caroline thought that strange, since she had distinctly told Jill that Alec was an instructor. "Afternoon," said Alec.

"So you're the boy from Nebraska. Whom do you know there?"

"William Jennings Bryan. Who do you know?"

"Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper."

"Oh, yes," Caroline said, though she hadn't really caught the names, "Jill knows lots of people you'd be interested in, Alec. Darling, tell him about the man you met in the speakeasy."

There's nothing about him," Jill said, "except that he
es little stories he gets two grand a throw for. Ever hear
loyd Geoffrey?"
Sorry, no."
Or Marcia Gate? She writes serials for the Satevepost
the Home Journal. Thirty thousand per."
Isn't it wonderful?" Caroline said. "Jill's in advertising,
know, and she gets to meet all these most wonderful peo-
Do you know any writers, Alec?"
I met one once." Alec started vaguely forward. "He was
vn in the basement of a library in Chicago, and he hadn't
n up for six years. He asked me to remember him to his
e." Jill laughed scornfully, and let her hair loose in the
eze, but it wasn't any use. Alec just lay down on his
y and watched the waves break against the bow.
Oh, dear, he wasn't going to like Jill, and John would get burned, and Caroline herself would be seasick, and the ole outing would be a mess. Labor Day! . . .
ohn said suddenly, "Look, we're in the islands. How
ut lunch?"
That went much better, because it was really afternoon and
n and Alec were starved. Even Jill's face brightened when
saw the Scotch. "Where the hell did you get that?"
That's Canadian," John said. "They do quite a business
t around here."
Isn't it terrible," Caroline asked of Alec, "the terrible
es one has to pay?"
The whole situation's pretty bad."
Caroline nodded thoughtfully. She noticed how expertly
was scrutinizing the Scotch, and how little she was getting
vn after all. "Of course we don't believe in prohibition
lly. Still, it's a good thing to keep it from people who
uldn't have it, don't you think?"
Who?"

"Oh, you know—factory hands, people like that. Immigrants. After all, it's only for their own good."

Alec blinked in the sun. "Well, if you don't like prohibition, I suppose you backed up Al Smith."

"Yes—in a way." Caroline laughed nervously, wishing she hadn't brought up politics in any way at all, because John was a loyal Republican and Alec sounded as though he might be a Democrat. "Of course we didn't really vote for him. I mean, a man like that, President—that type of man——"

"There's nothing against Smith personally," John interrupted loudly. John always seemed to shout when talking about politics. "Some of my best friends are Catholics. But let me tell you, if you want to keep your prosperity——"

"Oh," Jill cried, "it's ancient history. How about a swim?"

No one cared to move. Caroline told her, "You know you shouldn't go in right after lunch," and Alec lay down on the deck and gazed at her like a sleepy owl. John said, "If it's this hot out here, imagine what it's like in the city—poor beggars who have to stay there——"

"Oh, I don't know," Caroline said brightly, "I imagine they're used to it. I don't think they mind it, do you?"

"Maybe *they* don't," Jill said, and ran down into the cabin. Caroline—Alec, too, probably—could see her stripping off her slacks. When she came up again her one-piece swimming suit bulged in such places that Caroline was embarrassed. *In my day*, she thought—*oh, how old that made her seem!—such things were hidden, not revealed.*

Even Alec propped himself up on one elbow as Jill dived cleanly from the bow. But he didn't go in with her. He didn't show any great interest in her description of the warmth of the water, the length of a fish she'd seen, the extent of the others' laziness. He didn't even pay much attention,

after John swung the *Jenny Clinton* around Cuttyhunk toward home, to Jill's hilarious account of the speakeasies she'd lately been to in New York.

He just didn't seem interested in Jill.

Caroline said, "I hope you like the ocean, anyhow."

Alec grinned. He was watching the Nantucket boat pass white and splendid across their bow. "It's swell."

"I don't imagine you see much water in—where was it?—Nebraska."

"Not like this. We do have lakes."

Caroline frowned. It was hard to imagine what her cousin's life had been like, away out there—what kind the people were, how they talked. "The land must be rather monotonous, isn't it—so level?"

"The eastern part, yes. In the west there are hills."

"Not really?" And Nebraska had all looked so level in the geography book at boarding school. "I suppose it seems rather strange to you, teaching in a big university."

Alec stared at her. "You mean Harvard?"

"Yes, of course."

"We had ten thousand kids at Nebraska."

"Dear me," Caroline said. She saw she would have to speak rather carefully to Alec about Nebraska. It was possible he had become a bit provincial. "Of course, in a way it must have been handy—if you wanted to take a trip to California."

Alec chuckled. "Where I was, it was shorter to come here."

"Oh!"

"Before that, I used to teach at the University of Nevada."

"I see." Caroline nodded thoughtfully. She thought it advisable not to discuss Nevada.

After that she couldn't make Alec out. He preferred sitting at the wheel with John to being with Jill. He took a highball she mixed, but would hardly listen while she told about the real artists she knew who lived in Greenwich

Village and wore beards. Then, all of a sudden, he changed.

It was just turning dark, Caroline remembered, and John was looking for the Light off Sconticut Neck. Jill had gone forward to sit against a bulkhead, so that only her head was visible from the wheel. Caroline was helping John search for the Light. Suddenly she noticed Alec moving forward.

He sat beside Jill and remained there. After a time even their heads were no longer visible, but Alec did not return. . . . Caroline sighed happily. *How nice,* she thought. *Now at last Alec must have discovered some book, some hobby, some interest he had in common with Jill and now he could not leave her.*

How nice at last, Caroline thought, *how sweet.*

She herself remained with John. His old pipe was smoking steadily as he held the *Jenny Clinton* to her course. *Thank God, John was neither moody nor impulsive; always steadfast, always reliable, always there.* She rested her hand on his strong arm. *John would always be there.* Caroline Standler smiled contentedly at the waves in the dark. Labor Day! Near Sconticut Neck the Light shone out.

2

The moment Caroline awoke she knew it was Club day. Always she felt the same on that day—listless, reluctant, afraid to face it. Someone was moving around in the bathroom.

"Evalyn?"

"Yes, Mrs. Standler."

Her maid moved silently into the bedroom. A Brava, a Negress whose ancestors were slaves from the Cape Verdes, Evalyn enunciated English with a clearer tone than either John or Mark.

"Has Mr. Standler gone?"

"I believe he's finishing his coffee, Mrs. Standler. Mark left at six to go fishing."

Caroline made a face. Usually she got up in time to have breakfast with John. Today her subconscious mind must have rebelled against starting the day too soon.

She gazed up at Evalyn. *What a pretty girl—really no darker than Mark was when he came home from camp. Portuguese blood in her somehow,* Caroline thought lazily. A quick picture came—a white man lying with a Negro woman—the white flesh, the dark. . . . She shivered.

"Tell him I'll be down."

"Yes, Mrs. Standler."

John was frowning at the financial pages of the *Herald.* Caroline said at once, "John, you've got to help me."

John laid the paper down, but kept his eyes on it. "Trouble?"

"Oh, that old Whalers Club. First there's a membership committee meeting, and Mrs. Whipple called me up last night and said she's having a row with Ethel Lassiter about something or other, and it's going to be awful. Then they're just begging for more stuff for the museum."

"Seems to me half our house is in that museum."

"John, why do I have to do it?"

"The club—committee work?" John set his cup down firmly. "Now, you know why. You know it'd help if I ever do go into politics. I explained all that when we sent Mark to public school."

"I wish you weren't so awfully ambitious."

"Ever see a Standler who wasn't?" John chuckled, on his way to the door. "Now don't fret. Just you let Lucy Whipple run the membership committee. And give 'em whatever they want for that damned museum."

He kissed her on the forehead. Caroline walked back alone from the door. In the library she sighed. Actually, no matter

what she gave the museum, John would complain. He was so proud of his old family. She rarely thought of hers—except Mother, of course, who came from Boston. . . . She paused before the portrait of John's grandfather. The museum would never get that. Wouldn't John be furious to see it hanging there, with a little bronze plate reading: Elias Standler. 1807–1859. Lost at Sea.

Museum visitors were so crude. They poked fun at the dearest things. Caroline could just picture them gawking at the little gray hard face of Elias Standler, saying: "Who's that guy?"

Reading: "Elias Standler, 1807–1859."

"Oh, yeah." And perhaps one would say: "Heard about him. Big whaling captain. Wild bastard. A wife in every port, the way I heard it."

No. They would never have heard that about Elias Standler.

Still she imagined the voices going on: "Lost at sea, huh? Way I heard, he got sick of coming back to his sourpuss wife, so he settled down on one of those South Seas islands. Plucked himself a native girl and scuttled his own ship in the South Pacific."

No, no, not a true picture. Tourists would never have heard that story, though once it was told along this coast from Newport to Marblehead. They would never even have heard of Elias Standler.

She could hear the trucks and cars going busily past on County Street, but still she gazed at Elias. His was an interesting face. The greatest captain of them all, John always said, the very greatest, and that includes every damned one from Nantucket too. Caroline wondered if he really had had any South Sea women, and whether he remembered them when he died.

Looking at him, across all the years she felt sorry for him. His own son had refused to remain with him on the sea, his

wife was a shrew—why else would a man stay away from home, four years at a time?—and in the end, too young. . . .

Below the portrait, on a table with other bric-a-brac, was a piece of rope. It and the bowsprit and the figurehead were all that remained of the *Jenny Clinton*. They had been washed up on the shore of California; Mark Standler I—Elias' son, John's father—had had them shipped home. The figurehead was in the museum already, and this bit of rope would certainly be superfluous. As for Mark Standler's portrait——

The doorbell was ringing. Evalyn called, "A man to see you, Mrs. Standler."

The man was short and dark, his English unorthodox. He grinned at Caroline. "I'm solicit' for the Portuguese Relief Fund. Any small amount, grateful' accept."

"I see." She felt a sudden surge of irritation. Someone was always begging, always of the same few prominent people.

"For unemployment relief. People out of work, hungry, we try to help."

"I see." With the country booming with prosperity. And John always said these people could find a job if they really wanted one. Yet—— "You represent some kind of club?"

"Oh, yes. Portuguese Mutual Society."

"Very well." After all, John might scold her if she didn't send something. She never could understand politics very well. "I'll see that you get a check for ten dollars."

"Thank you, lady." The dark little man sidled out; the bell on the Catholic church began to sound.

"Evalyn! Not really nine? Whatever will Mrs. Whipple say?"

Mrs. Whipple said nothing when Caroline walked into the Whalers Club, though it was plain on her face she didn't care for tardiness.

"I will call the roll at once," said Mrs. Whipple briskly. "Mr. Barrett."

There was no answer.

"Mr. Kendrick." No answer.

"Mrs. Lassiter."

"Here."

"Mrs. Standler."

"Present."

"And Mrs. Whipple, present. The men have left the work to us as usual," Mrs. Whipple said cheerfully. "Let us proceed at once to the business of the membership committee." She looked at Mrs. Lassiter. Mrs. Lassiter seemed to shrink down in her chair.

"It seems to consist of the application of a candidate for membership."

Caroline asked, "Who is it?"

Mrs. Whipple picked up the paper. "Izaura Sylvia Rodrigues."

"*Who?*"

"A woman named Rodrigues. Obviously Portuguese."

"Well, I declare."

Mrs. Whipple tossed the paper down. "Of course, it's ridiculous. Someone must have put her up to it. The Portuguese have their own clubs."

"The only thing is," Mrs. Lassiter said in a pale voice, "the Whalers Club is supposed to be open to descendants of whalers, and Mrs. Rodrigues states her great-grandfather was a whaling captain."

"But not here!"

"Yes." Mrs. Whipple glanced at the paper. "She says her great-grandfather was Joseph Sylvia, a sea captain who sailed out of this port around 1850. I've no doubt it's so. I've heard that little Portuguese consul speak of him."

"No!"

"What bothers me," Mrs. Lassiter said, "are the rules. They distinctly say a descendant of a whaler is eligible, and in fact many people have been admitted when they weren't really whalers——"

Caroline glanced quickly at Lucy Whipple. She recalled John's saying that Zachary Whipple hadn't been a sea captain at all, but just a damned ship chandler who never got off the wharves. But Mrs. Whipple seemed not to have heard.

"I think it's time for a vote," she said. "And I move that this application for membership be rejected."

"But," Ethel Lassiter wailed, "the rules——"

"I beg your pardon. There is a motion before us. Well—aren't you going to second it?"

"I'm against it," Mrs. Lassiter said meekly.

"I don't mean *you*!"

Caroline sighed. Here she was again; no matter which way she voted, she'd be offending someone. And yet it was clear the right way was the only way——

"I second it," she said, "and vote in favor of it."

"And the motion is passed." Mrs. Whipple banged the table triumphantly. "The application for membership is rejected."

"I was only trying to think of the rules," Mrs. Lassiter said. . . . Outside, in the lobby, Caroline went to a desk. She took out her pen and checkbook, and wrote:

"The Portuguese Mutual Society . . . fifty dollars."

She slipped the check into an envelope, and on her way to the hotel for lunch dropped it into a mailbox.

Her appetite was enormous.

3

The day her son Mark left home, Caroline waited for him in the library. She imagined that the mementoes, the portraits, might be an inspiration to him, as they had always been to John.

"I'd go down with you, but I thought I'd rather say good-by here."

"That's all right, Mother."

He looked nice in his tweed suit, though Caroline frowned at his shoes. "Isn't it a little late for those brown and white things?"

"I guess they wear them later than this at Harvard."

Caroline smiled tolerantly. Harvard boys were always a bit eccentric. Her mother had told her of the crazy stunts they used to do, especially in the winter on Beacon Hill. Mother had known a lot of Harvard boys. "Of course, we expect you to study hard."

"Sure, Mother."

"Did your father speak to you about clubs?"

"Nope."

"Oh, dear, he should have." It was awful the way John always left such things to her. Now she wasn't even sure she could remember the names. It was fortunate she had heard them mentioned often: "Hasty Pudding, the Fly Club, the D.K.E. Those are the ones really worth joining. You'll meet some nice boys."

"All right."

"Mark——"

"Yes, Mother?"

This especially was for John to explain, man to man. "Mark, if you go out with girls I hope they're—nice girls."

Mark grinned. "I probably won't have much time anyhow, darn it."

"I do hope you'll see something of Faith Brimmer."

Mark nodded politely.

Caroline hadn't intended to get off on that subject. "Mark—about the girls. I do hope they'll be nice, because——"

Mark seemed surprised. "Yes, Mother?" He stared hard at her. She looked down quickly at his shoes.

"Of course, if you're asked to any nice parties week-ends

you'll go, but come home when you can. And of course, you'll write."

"Sure." He stood up. "I'll say good-by to Dad at the bank."

"Good-by, son."

"Good-by, be good."

She watched him walk out to his cab. He was at least a foot taller than he'd been the day he left for St. Paul's.

She turned her back on him, and when she looked at the wall her sight was vague with mist. It was only then she remembered: *I could have used the portraits to point a lesson.*

She went over to Mark I. Behind her she could hear the cab pulling away. . . . She could have reminded him that the first Mark Standler had disappointed his father Elias, and that the old man's heart was broken when he died.

But probably John wouldn't want her to say that, since he was always so proud of his father. Mark Standler I. 1835–1914.

Under bushy eyebrows he glared back at her. She could readily believe the tales of the historic row there had been with Elias, when Mark refused to go to sea again.

"There's no god-damned future in whales," he said. He had saved some money, he borrowed more, he started a small mill like those in Rhode Island. He was twenty-four.

In a year or two men were taking oil from the Pennsylvania earth and, though no one knew it yet, there was no god-damned future in whales.

She had heard John tell it so many times. During the Civil War the Standler mills wove cloth for army uniforms. Some thought the boom ended with the war, but not Mark Standler. When every bank in town refused him money to construct more mills, he started his own bank. In 1870, as a sort of added irony, he married the daughter of the chief banker who'd opposed him.

Men said you had to get up mighty early in the morning to get ahead of old Standler.

I wonder what you'd say, Caroline thought, looking at him, *if you knew there's almost nothing but the bank left now. You never did think much of banks—not even your own.*

But it wasn't John's fault really. Caroline knew what they said about John downtown—at the club, at the Rotary luncheon, in that speakeasy on Purchase Street: "Standler's not half the man old Mark was. Look at the way he lost control of the mills, how all that money went. . . ."

It wasn't fair. John could have let the mills go bankrupt instead of reorganizing them, instead of giving that New York syndicate a chance to buy up a majority of the shares. What a mess it all was, and Caroline never really understood it. She did know that John wasn't in on the mills the syndicate had bought in North Carolina; she'd often heard him say that they were letting the Standler mills go hang, they didn't give a damn about them, they were switching all the business down South. So the mill shares weren't really worth much, true, but was that John's fault? Suddenly she realized her head was aching.

It was still aching when John came home to lunch, but she forgot it, seeing how gay he was. "I don't understand how you can be so cheerful, the very day your son's left home."

"Oh, Harvard's not that bad." He grinned. "I've just made up my mind about something."

"Yes?"

"Those stocks. You know how they've been going up and down all month? Well, yesterday they really went down—bad." He looked up brightly from his soup. "So today I'm buying more."

"Don't eat so fast, John. . . . Buying more—if they're going down? Really, I don't quite——"

"Don't you see? The time to buy is when they're low. Now take G.E. A month ago it was about 390. Today it's 360. There's 30 dollars a share for you when it goes back up. I'm putting in all the cash I can get hold of."

"But doesn't it take an awful lot? I mean, if it's 360 for just one little share——"

John laughed. "You don't have to put it all up. You just put up a certain percentage—ninety dollars, say. Then your broker borrows the rest of the money for you. When the price goes up above 360 you cash in."

"But suppose it goes *below* 360?"

"Then you have to put in a little more."

"But"—Caroline hesitated, for she didn't want him to think her too much of a simpleton—"suppose it goes down so much or so fast——"

John explained patiently, "In that case, if you couldn't raise the money, your broker would have to sell your stock to pay back the loan and you'd lose all you put in."

"I see." She didn't quite, and her head was aching again.

"But of course that doesn't happen."

"I suppose not."

"I've got to finish the *Herald*," John said. They rose from the table, and Evalyn began silently to clear it. John sat beneath the portrait of his father and hid himself in the newspaper.

"The *Herald* says just what I said."

"About what?"

"Buying." His face went back into the paper.

Caroline watched him patiently. It would be very nice, she thought, when John made all that money. They could buy a home in Florida for the winter and then people like Lucy Whipple would really look up to them. Or maybe John would be able to go into politics and they would live part of the year in Washington and give parties. It really would be nice. Mark would marry some fine girl—like Faith

Brimmer—and come to see them often. Perhaps he could run the bank, while John——

She looked up quickly. John was folding the *Herald.*

"John, I'm worried."

"About what, dear?"

"Mark. I tried to speak to him about girls and I couldn't. I think you should have done it before he left."

John chuckled. "Smut talk, eh?"

"There are certain things he should know."

John struggled into his topcoat. "Don't worry, he'll get along." But after John had gone she sat there still thinking about the matter. She wished John would realize there were some things in life which really were serious, and about which one really should worry before it was too late.

4

On Friday, October 25, Evalyn laid the newspaper gently on the bed.

Caroline didn't care to look at it. She felt tired and bored to death. All day yesterday John had been a problem—running in and out of the house, missing lunch, biting her head off at dinner, burying his face in the financial pages. He said himself that the stocks always went up again, and yet now, just because they seemed to go down a bit——

At eight o'clock she had retired to her room. Let him keep his old newspaper. Caroline began to answer a letter from her son.

Mark liked Harvard. But right now he was having November hour exams—rather silly, Caroline thought, November exams in October—and he needed six dollars for his geology field trips. Somehow it didn't seem advisable to bother John about the six dollars right now, and Caroline wrote out a check herself.

After that she had fallen asleep, and here was Evalyn with the newspaper.

Caroline glanced at it wearily. The wide black screaming headline seemed to strike her in the face:

STOCK CRASH WIPES OUT BILLIONS

Slow with surprise, her hands picked it up.

> Frightened by the decline in stock prices in the last month and a half, thousands of stockholders dumped their shares on the market yesterday afternoon in such an avalanche of selling as to bring about one of the wildest declines in history. Even the best of seasoned, dividend-paying shares were sold regardless of the price they would bring, and the result was a tremendous smash. . . .

Her eyes skimmed in incredulous jumps over the story. The actual loss would run to about $4,000,000,000. Much forced liquidation because of unanswered margin calls. Was that what John had tried to explain to her once? Many thousands of margin accounts were wiped out. . . .

Dubiously she turned to the table of stocks and prices. She wasn't sure she could understand what the figures meant, but anyhow— Here was G.E. Its first price had been 334. It had closed at 314. Therefore, the net change—yes, here it was, in the last column—was —20.

Minus twenty! Why, that meant a loss of twenty dollars a share!

She looked back to the head of the list, and let her eyes skip from the name of the stock to the last column.

Adams Express	—96
American & Foreign Power	—23¼
Am. Tel. & Tel.	—15
Auburn Auto	—77

"Goodness," Caroline murmured aloud, "it's apt to take a long time for them to go up again this time, isn't it?"

Evalyn asked from the doorway, "What?"

"Nothing," Caroline answered. "You wouldn't understand, Evalyn."

At noon—John had just sent word he'd not be home for lunch—the radio announcer said, "Wall Street is dismayed by the sudden collapse of paper profits on the stock exchange. Margin accounts were particularly hard hit in yesterday's debacle; one more bad day will make it impossible, or extremely difficult, for those speculators who still survive to keep their accounts covered. . . ."

At three, John telephoned. "I won't be home for dinner."

He sounded the same as always. "Where are you going, John?"

"New York. Get the train at Providence."

"Oh." He did seem a little tense. She hesitated. "John, are you taking care of your stocks all right?"

"That's what I'm going for."

"Oh. I should think you'd just send a check. But isn't it——"

"Now let me handle it in my own way, will you?" He was almost shouting, and she had to pull the receiver away from her ear. His voice softened: "I'll see you tomorrow or the day after, Caroline. Good-by."

She felt she might weep. It had been a long time since he had spoken to her as harshly as that. Much more than his father or grandfather, John had always been a gentleman. *Oh, damn,* she thought, *how stupid. The newspapers were always getting people worked up over something or other.*

The next time Evalyn laid the paper on her bed, she wasn't really surprised at all by the headlines:

BUSINESS IS ON SOUND BASIS,
HOOVER ASSURES THE NATION;
STOCKS ARE STEADY ALL DAY

President Says Our Industry Is Prosperous

So there you were, and that was that. The newspapers were always getting people worked up over something or other, and then making them feel foolish afterwards.

She thumbed through the pages towards the women's section. In either Florida or Washington, she decided suddenly, she would like to have a new fur piece—there were so many nice ones these days. Judiciously she scanned the advertisements.

FELICIA · WINTER

I

THAT WAS THE NIGHT they kept the stove hot. Pots crowded it. Fast day or no fast day, haddock or no haddock, dinner was still a ritual. First, Mother brought out the *opłatek*. As Stefan and Stanislaw each broke off a piece, Felicia saw a wetness in her mother's eyes. This was for Father, Felicia knew, bending her own head over the wafer, not looking at Mother.

"Come, eat," said Mother loudly; "see, mushroom soup!"—and her voice lifted with pride for her handiwork. Soup in cans was for sick or lazy women, Mother always said.

The dishes were hardly cleared away and the twins in bed, before the first knocks sounded. "No, no," Felicia cried towards the back door; "first you must carol."

And, shakily at first but with increasing harmony, the old song came:

> Dziśiaj w Betlejem, Dziśiaj w Betlejem—
> Wesoła nowina!
> Rze panna czysta, rze panna czysta,
> Porodziła syna. . . .

Felicia flung open the door, and Mr. Sikorski grinned at her. "Not bad, eh?" His wife was with him, and a younger woman Felicia vaguely remembered. "You know my niece, Marie Koczera, from New Jersey?"

"Oh, yes." Yes. This was the Koczera girl who'd had some kind of trouble over a man, years ago when she first came over. Felicia wished she could remember just what the trouble was, as she tried not to stare at Marie Koczera.

Mother was on hand already with the tray of drinks—a tall whisky for Mr. Sikorski, smaller ones for the women, none for Felicia. Felicia saw Miss Koczera sigh a little as she picked up her jigger. Perhaps she was used to fancier drinks, back in New Jersey. Mother never served a chaser unless someone asked for it. No one ever asked.

"*Na zdrowie!*"

"To you and yours."

"Yes," said Mother. "My Jan used to say: 'May our children have rich parents.' "

No one spoke for a moment, and Mr. Sikorski asked quickly, "I don't see the Cieslaks—usually they are first to come."

"No," Mother said slowly, half listening, "they have not come yet."

Mr. Sikorski smiled at Felicia. "I told you about my brother Anzelm? He agrees to come over, though on a condition."

"Oh?"

"He has only enough money to come, and is so doubtful still——" Mr. Sikorski laughed. "We told him we will pay his passage home should he not like it here."

"Oh!"

"We have enough money saved for that, so now he has nothing to lose. For us it is no gamble."

"I'm so glad, Mr. Sikorski."

Mr. Sikorski beamed, but Marie Koczera shook her head. "Don't be too sure. Suppose he doesn't like this country?"

"It is a great country," Mr. Sikorski said firmly. "My brother will like it. I am betting on it."

Marie Koczera shook her head. . . . *Something about a man. And she doesn't like the country. Why, I think I remember——*

Just then, another knock on the door.

"First you must carol!"

Wśród w nocnej,
Głos się rozchodzi——

Mr. Sikorski shouted, "Good, sing again!" and would not open till they had gone through another verse. "Oh, for the love of Mike," Joan Urban exclaimed. Laughing, she came in with her mother and father.

That meant another drink for all, while the Urbans shook hands with Marie Koczera. Mrs. Urban said, "The Cieslaks, they're not here?" Mother said, "No, it's too bad—Felicia, see if they will come."

Felicia and Joan Urban climbed towards the third floor. Joan asked, "Going to the dance?"

"The Alumni dance? I don't know. Pete Zonak asked me, but— Are you?"

"Uh huh. Phil Kuznicki."

Felicia looked at her curiously. "Didn't Bert Sullivan ask you?"

Joan seemed a little cross. "Do I have to go with Bert all the time?"

"No." Felicia knocked on the Cieslaks' door. "No, of course not."

Mrs. Cieslak called in a tired voice, "All right, we'll be down," and Joan said apologetically, "Why don't we all go together? It'll be such fun——"

"I don't know. I'll see. Let's get Cecile, shall we?"

So on Cecile St. Andre's door they knocked too, and Cecile came down to Felicia's with them. Everyone was talking Polish; Cecile said, "*Jak sie masz, panna, panni?*"

Joan giggled. "For a Frog, that's pretty good."

"It's about time I knew a few words."

"No," Mr. Sikorski said, "it is we who should know more of your tongue." Felicia saw Marie Koczera listening with a frown. "Sometimes I think we would all better off if we spoke more in English."

"You do very well, Mr. Sikorski."

"No. Reading—that is all right for me. But when I say the words—I have no practice, I do not know the sounds."

Mother was handing out another drink.

"Well, when you come right down to it," Cecile smiled, "what you'll hear in my house isn't English really. French. And when I study French in school I think it isn't French either. I don't know what it is."

Mr. Sikorski nodded. "We have a strange country."

"I'm glad you agree with me," said Marie Koczera.

Joan turned deliberately and stared at her. A slow remembrance came to her eyes. Watching it, Felicia was apprehensive. She did hope Joan would say nothing embarrassing. But all Joan said was: "You haven't been around here for a long time, have you?"

"No." Marie Koczera's cheeks flushed. "No, I haven't." Her cheeks were on fire. She grabbed a drink from Mother and gulped it.

Then Felicia saw it all again. A cold day, and the women were talking around Mother's stove—about a girl named Marie, who was heartbroken. Two days before her wedding, her fiance had broken their engagement. Utterly. Coldly, without cause.

That could never have happened in the old country, the women said. In this new country, we find such things. This Marie was very bitter.

"No," Marie Koczera said, "I've been away . . ." Felicia was glad to hear someone at the door.

But though everyone shouted, "*Kolęda*!" the Cieslaks wouldn't carol. They came in quietly, almost sullenly. Mr. Cieslak waved his hand feebly at the others; he looked a bit ill. Mother was passing around the drinks again.

Joan said, "We're going to the dance. Are you, Cecile?"

"No, darn it; I've got to visit my cousin in New York and I'll miss the dance and be away behind on dirt——"

"I could write to you about it, if I go."

"Oh, thanks, Felicia!"

Just then Mr. Urban put his arms around Mr. Sikorski and around Mother and began the carols over again. After Mother distributed another round of drinks all were singing with him, and after still another round they were through with the carols and into livelier tunes. When they reached the one about the sexual education of a girl named Wandzia, Felicia looked laughingly at Cecile.

"They're almost through now. I'm sorry you can't appreciate the words."

"I get the drift."

Then all began their good-bys—with handshakes, with kisses, with more carols. All except the Cieslaks. They nodded, and smiled, and went upstairs.

Felicia sighed, as she began picking up the glasses. It was all over now. Unless perhaps some carollers came by in the morning at four or five, that was the end of Christmas Eve.

"Marie Koczera is still quite pretty, isn't she, Ma?"

"Oh, yes."

"I do think the Cieslaks acted funny."

Mother was examining her stove. "They are good people."

"Well, they could have been a little more sociable."

"It does not matter."

"What was ailing them, anyhow?"

Mother looked around for the poker. Her voice was flat. "Mr. Cieslak just lost his job at the mill."

Felicia stared incredulously. "Oh, Ma! Not the day before Christmas?"

"No." Mother shoved her poker viciously into the fire. "Two days before," said Mother.

2

Dear Cecile:

The dance was last night, and since I'm just bubbling over with dirt about it—isn't that a fine figure of speech?—I'd better write to you now.

I had a new dress, did you know?—a sort of peach, with a scarlet band around the waist and a scarlet hem. I thought the neck showed rather a lot of bust but Ma said no, she was sick of these flat-chested styles anyhow. She helped me finish it, the darling. . . .

Actually Mother hadn't been anxious for her to go to the Alumni dance at all, even if she was going with a Polish boy. It had taken Felicia quite a while to discover why.

It seemed that Mother wanted her to have something to brag about.

"Suppose they ask you," Mother said, "what are you doing? You will have to say you're just working in the—what do you call it?—the Five and Dive. That is no good for you."

"But Ma, they'll know I'm just working a year to save money and help you out, Stefan having the mastoid operation and everything——"

"Always you were going to college. Always you told them so."

"But Ma, I *am* going. The Women's Club said they'd keep my tuition money for me till next year!"

Mother shook her head stubbornly. "Working in the Five and Dive. That is no good."

"Ma, you're impossible!"

"Of course, many college people can't even get such a job these days."

That was true. It frightened Felicia a little to see the girls come in every day looking for jobs—girls who once would have stuck up their noses at the five-and-ten. So many people waiting to take your job. Every day one heard of someone else—Komar, for example. Komar had lost money in the stock crash, had had to sell his new car, and now——

"Did you hear about Komar getting laid off?"

"Yes. Mrs. Albecki too."

"Whatever will they do, Ma?"

"I don't know. I know what we will do." Mother's eyes flashed. "What we won't do. We won't take charity—from anyone, any time." Felicia laid the peach dress down. This was a favorite subject with Mother, and would last her quite a time.

"No charity. Always stand on your own feet—work. Save."

"Yes, Ma."

"Be obliged to no one. If you're out of work, have money in the bank. We have a little money in the bank, Felicia."

"Yes, I know."

"Of course it is only a little bank. I am not sure it's a very strong one. You must save also, Felicia."

"Yes, Ma."

> . . . So when we got to the dance just everyone was there. I went with Pete Zonak, because no one else had asked. Ma thinks he's wonderful because he's got his own auto repair shop and Joan says he adores me but I had to ask her how she knew—all he ever says is "Yes" and "No" and the next thing he's saying is "Good night." Of course, he's a perfect gentleman, and you half expect him to kiss your hand. (Actually, he shakes it.)
>
> Begin at the beginning, Felicia. All right.
>
> The very first person we saw was Joe Sylvia—right inside

the door, helping with the tickets, as you might know. I suppose you heard he got the Women's Club scholarship—he's going to M. I. T. They say it's the first time in years they didn't give it to the boy who won the scholarship and leadership award. I asked Joe what Steve O'Mara thought about that, but he just grinned. I saw O'Mara later too, damn him.

The band was very good. I danced with Pete and Phil Henry and Kuznicki and Joe. After a while O'Mara came along. I let him dance with me—why, I don't know—and then he insisted on sitting down and telling me all about himself. It seems he's a substitute mail carrier or some such thing. He's going to college next year, he says. Me and him both, and one of us is a liar.

He kept trying to put his arm around me and work his hand in between my arm and me—you know. I should have slapped his handsome puss, but you know the way he looks at you, sort of surprised, and somehow you just don't.

I said, "Why don't you put your hands in your pockets?" "You like it," he said. I got up and walked away, and afterwards wished I had hit him.

But afterwards I met *him*, and then everything was all right. Yes, *him*. Mark Standler. And Cecile darling, he asked me to a dance!—the spring dance, it's called, though it comes right after midyears. It's to be held at one of the houses at Harvard. And then he danced with me twice, and everything was all right, and it was such fun afterwards, remembering him. . . .

When Felicia came into the house that night, after the Alumni dance, her mother said, as though she'd been thinking of nothing else: "I took care of the bank account."

Felicia was taking off her coat; she scarcely heard. "Oh?"

"I took it out of the little bank and put it into the big one. What is it? They call it the Standler bank."

"Oh!"

"Is that a good bank?"

Felicia was half out of her coat; her breast rose deeply.

She whispered, "Oh, yes, Mother darling, that is a lovely, lovely, beautiful bank!" Her mother looked a little startled.

3

Joan Urban's aunt lived in Somerville, right next to Cambridge, and she said yes, of course Felicia could dress at her house. Felicia could sleep there too if she wished, but Felicia said that wouldn't be necessary.

Mother said the whole plan was preposterous.

"Why do you want to go to this affair?"

"Because it'll be fun. And Mark Standler's—nice."

"This Standler, he is not a Polish boy?"

"You know he's not."

Mother shook her head despairingly. For the first time in a long while her voice was really angry: "Are there no Polish boys for you to dance with?"

"Ma, please! Must we go over that again?"

"I don't see how you will get to this dance."

"By train. Mark's meeting me in Boston, and we'll go to the Urbans' and then to the dance."

Mother sniffed loudly. "A fine way! Aren't you good enough for him to come after you?"

"Ma, he has classes! You don't expect him to come away down here after school and get me and go back to Cambridge and back here again, do you, all in one day?"

"A fine way to act!"

"He can't help it!"

"Pete Zonak would never act that way," Mother said complacently.

To Mr. Sikorski Felicia went for support. She sat down and frowned at him, across the kitchen tablecloth.

"Mr. Sikorski, why is she so mad on the subject of Polish boys?"

Mr. Sikorski shook his head slowly. His voice was thoughtful. "Soon there will be no more Polish people."

"But after all, this is America! She's got to expect her children will go out and mix with other people."

"Maybe, yes." Mr. Sikorski smiled gently. "But she, me—we are the old-timers. We came here, we are a little lost. Always in this country we will be a little lost. Me—I study, learn to read, but still——" He shrugged. "Well, we have the friends, the language, the songs, the little customs. But the old friends die. And the children—— You see?"

Felicia frowned. "Maybe."

"If our children go off and marry strangers—people who don't even speak the language—soon they will be strangers too. And their children. And to us, all will be strangers. We will feel lost then, yes—more and more lost."

"But Mr. Sikorski, I just want to go out with someone! I don't intend to *marry* the boy."

Mr. Sikorski grinned sadly. "I have to tell you about the Polish. Do I have to tell you about Mother Nature too?"

So Mr. Sikorski wasn't much comfort after all, and on the train Felicia was rather blue. But at Back Bay station she saw Mark Standler's face sliding past the window as the train slowed. Suddenly, enormously, she felt better.

He was tall, smiling, there below her on the station platform.

"It's sure good to see you!"

"That's because I'm someone from home."

"I haven't been homesick for years," Mark Standler said.

He carried her bag upstairs and out to his roommate's car. *If Mark were O'Mara,* Felicia couldn't help thinking, *he'd have a few paws on me by now. If O'Mara were Mark, possibly I'd like it. . . .* "How were exams?"

"Bad."

Listening to him, she wondered a little about herself. *I was*

pretty good on things like exams, I learned fast. I wonder if I really will ever go to school again, or if I'll ever be as good as once I was. . . .

She was almost frightened when she saw the House. From the first it was nothing less than elegant—ornamented gates, an impressive courtyard, and the spire, green or blue, rising prettily into the moonlight. Afterwards she tried to describe the interior to Joan, but all she could remember was that everything was quite ornate—gold and mahogany, oil portraits, rugs her feet bounced on. *Golly*, she thought, *maybe it's really true only rich boys go to Harvard.*

A room had been set aside as a ladies' powder room. Felicia saw it was already crowded. The girls gave her a quick, appraising glance and turned back to their mirrors. They seemed older than she, so much older than the boys they came with. Somehow they all reminded her of that Brimmer girl Mark had taken to the Junior Prom. And their gowns. . . . Felicia looked down dubiously at her own simple black. *Well, to hell with them,* she thought. *I bought it ready-made at Cherry's—it cost me a week of my life—and damn them, it ought to be good.*

The girl beside her was practically bumping elbows with her every time she powdered her face, but she didn't speak or smile or intimate in any fashion that Felicia might be alive. *Jesus,* Felicia thought, *I'd like to poke this icy bitch in the fanny and say, "Some dump, huh?" just to see what'd happen.*

She didn't. She turned to go; a girl nearly ran into her; it was Faith Brimmer.

"Why, *hello*," Faith Brimmer said, as though she couldn't believe her eyes. "How do you *do*?"

"Hi," and Felicia smiled delightedly. *He could have taken her. . . .*

Mark was waiting for the first dance. He seemed to know everyone; three of her dances were taken up on the way to

the receiving line. The first was with a very tall boy, whose name she didn't catch. His hair was cut so short it was nearly non-existent. He danced with a sort of leaping, antelope motion. He said nothing. He grinned at her and disappeared.

Mark then brought forth a man whose stature was shorter and wider than most of the others. "Jack Rucker," Mark said, as though the name meant something.

Felicia was at ease with him from the start.

"It's a nice dance floor, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Jack Rucker said. "Hate to disillusion you, though —the kids spill bread-crumbs here in the daytime."

"Don't you live here?"

"Good Lord, no—I couldn't afford to drink water in this shack, sister. I bunk up in the Varsity Club."

"Oh. Then——"

"Don't worry." Jack Rucker threw out his big chest a little farther and grinned. "They don't mind if I crash. I add a little class to the party."

"Am I supposed to know you?" Felicia said, but Jack Rucker only winked.

She had to ask Mark about him. Mark was astonished. "Gosh, Felicia, he's Jack Rucker the football player—the only one we've got, you might say. He made that long run against Yale last year."

"Sorry. I only follow Notre Dame," she said—low, so that no one would hear. But Jack Rucker had been nice.

The next boy was tall, like the first, and with as little hair. He had sort of frozen blue eyes; she wasn't sure he had ever shaved. "I haven't seen you at the dances before." He sounded almost accusing.

"No."

"You don't live in Boston?"

"No," and she told him where she lived.

"I see." He seemed to be examining the name in his mind.

He didn't seem to care much for it. "Do you know Colonel Marsden?"

"No. I've heard of him, of course."

"I see." His pink face brightened. "You're a friend of the Standlers?"

"Just Mark. I don't know his family."

"Oh." The boy frowned. He circled the floor twice in silence. Then, hopefully: "Wellesley?"

"No, I told you where I live."

The pink face flushed. "I mean, do you *go* to Wellesley?"

"No, I don't."

A little less hopefully: "Radcliffe?"

"No. As a matter of fact," Felicia said, "I work."

"Work?"

"Yes. In a store." She saw him look around, almost frantically, as though someone had trapped him. She was smiling, though he couldn't see her. Mischief was in her eyes.

"The place I work in," she said, "is called the five-and-ten. You know—shopgirl."

His face was dazed. He wasn't able to say another word. He pushed her off the floor three measures before the orchestra really stopped. He looked, incredulous, at Mark. He ran.

Mark said, "What's biting him?" Felicia couldn't answer, she was giggling so.

There was another dance with Mark, which made up for everything, and then intermission. Felicia kept looking around for Faith Brimmer. *He could have got a dance with her*, she thought, *but he hasn't—yet.* . . . People sat around in little groups. Felicia couldn't help observing that everyone, except her, seemed to know everyone else. When these boys had a dance they asked these girls, when these girls had a dance they asked these boys. . . . There was punch, and many of the boys drank a little and quietly filled their cups again from silver flasks.

Dancing afterwards was more fun, possibly because of the flasks. One boy told her in excerpts from Elizabethan verse how pretty she was; another wanted to come down to see her the very next night; another spoke a curious language which he insisted was pure English, though Felicia had never heard its like before:

> Now voucheth sauf this day, or hit be night,
> That I of you the blisful soun may here,
> Or see your colour lyk the sonne bright,
> That of yelownesse hadde never pere.
> Ye be my lyf, ye by myn hertes stere——

"I beg your pardon?" said Felicia. A boy fell on his face in the middle of the floor and had to be slid away. It was the second from last dance, and Mark hadn't danced with Faith Brimmer. It was the next to last. It was the last, the orchestra was playing *Whispering,** and Felicia was dancing with him herself.

"Mark, it's been a grand, a glorious time."

On the ride out of the city, through the towns, past the bleak woods, it seemed unnecessary to say much more. It was enough just to ride beside him, with her shoulder touching his and his firm hands on the wheel before her. She thought only once of Faith Brimmer, only twice of Mother, who no doubt had expected her hours ago. Already she could hear Mother demanding, "Where have you been till this hour?" At the junction where he turned from the Boulevard into the Avenue, Mark said:

"I hope I'll see you again."

"Yes."

He took his eyes from the road and looked at her squarely. "If I can't, soon—it's a long way, I don't come often—you won't misunderstand?"

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"No." She wondered if he was remembering that other time, too. Gravely, she said, "I'll never misunderstand you again."

Then they were in front of her house, and he was opening the car door for her and it was over. On the back porch, he said, "Well, thanks for coming."

"Thank you for asking me."

In the half-light she could scarcely see his face. "I hope this isn't too terribly late."

"It's all right."

He hesitated. "You—you looked swell."

"Thank you."

"Well—good night."

"Good night."

He was still hesitating there. Felicia said softly, "I'd like very much to have you kiss me, if you want."

His head bent towards her silently. In that moment her heart was pounding as though it would break out of her breast. His firm lips pressed hard against hers. She never afterward remembered turning from him, or opening the door.

Her mother's hair was down. She looked old, standing in a faded kimona by the fire. Mother's eyes were a reprimand, as they looked from the clock to Felicia and to the clock again. "*Gdzieś ty była do tej godziny?*"

"In heaven," said Felicia. But Mother did not seem to understand.

ALEC · SPRING

I

On the grass, between the long shadows of the trees, were patches of sunlight still. Alec squinted, as he watched Mark Standler come down the walk past University Hall and the statue of John Harvard. He was sure it was Mark, because his quick, nervous walk—his limp made it seem a bit more nervous, that was all—was so much like his father's. It was not possible to make out his face from here.

Alec took Caroline Standler's letter from his desk, where it had lain as a reminder ever since last fall, and tossed it into a drawer.

Mark was already stamping up the stairs. "Mr. Marwick?"

"Come in." He could see the young face now and he thought at once, *I'm always meeting someone who reminds me of someone else.*

"I'm Mark Standler."

"Sit down, Mark. Cigarette?"

Mark smiled at him through the smoke. "Mother told me last fall to look you up. I thought I'd better before the year was over."

"We're both in the same boat," Alec said, without much interest in what he was saying. *The same nice face,* he thought, *the same nice candid eyes.* "I was told to call you in and give you some fatherly advice."

"That's mother. She thinks you've nothing else to do and that I couldn't get along without advice, child that I am——"

Alec grinned. "I'll see what I can do. How have you liked it?"

"Harvard? O. K. How about you, sir?"

"Don't call me sir. O. K. All kinds of people."

"You didn't go here yourself?"

"No, I went to Minnesota."

"And how was Minnesota?"

"All right," Alec said, "I guess. What I saw of it—when I wasn't babying furnaces or cramming for exams in courses I hadn't time to attend. I worked my way through Minnesota.'

"I suppose that's the traditional way."

"Maybe. Don't let anyone tell you it's a good way—except for the t. b. sanitariums and the nuthouses."

Mark nodded. "I suppose not. I guess in a way I'm pretty lucky."

Alec blinked. "You can see that?"

"Sure. Why not?"

Alec shrugged. Beyond his window a phonograph needle scratched *I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby*,* and a high voice yelled, "Hey, *Rinehart*!" . . . Mark looked up quickly, his voice was quick and thoughtful and perhaps a little surprised at himself: "I spent a long time in that hospital, that time. And I'd always thought good health was something the world owed me. I found out differently. It made me feel a little—well——"

"There but for the grace of God——?"

"That's it. A little humble, I guess. And some of the fellows around here feel the same way about their old man's money—anyone who hasn't money must be a dope. They strike me funny sometimes, but I don't blame them. They haven't any reason to think otherwise."

"No."

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"I have. . . . But how about the advice, sir?"

"Ah, the advice." Alec tapped his fingertips together satirically, like a judge, like a priest. "I trust you don't smoke."

Mark grinned, crushing his cigarette butt.

"As long as you don't inhale. And keep out of poker games and don't spend your afternoons shooting pool up back in Leavitt's."

"All right to go out with girls, sir?"

"If they're nice girls. And don't laugh at that," Alec said, and now he remembered. "I had a classmate named Webb Carlson, once. Wanted to be a surgeon. He could be a lesson to you."

"What happened?"

"Nothing strange. He just got mixed up with the wrong girl, and she made him think he had to marry her, because poor Webb was such an honest soul."

"Nothing like that ever happens to me, I'm afraid, sir."

Something else clicked in his mind then—something about girls? "Well, quite seriously, be sure to tell your mother I saw you. Don't tell her when."

"I'll cover us both up, sir."

"Damn it, don't call me sir." . . . Mark had hardly gone down the stairs before Ted Brewster's bald top was gleaming in the doorway.

"Having company, doc?"

"Not now, Ted. Come in." Brewster always strolled over from Holworthy at eight o'clock, always called him doc, always strolled out again after ten minutes. "There's a remarkable boy, Ted."

"Friend of yours?"

"Yes. His parents—good people, fine people—think they're the sun and the world revolves around them. He's not so sure about it."

"Yeah. That keeps the country progressing. Heredity." Brewster threw a long leg up over a chair arm. "Good thing it doesn't amount to much."

"Yes."

Brewster stared at him amiably in the twilight. "You're the Harvard type, all right."

"What?"

"Always analyzing."

"Sure."

"You analyze history, know precisely what was right and wrong a thousand years ago, but don't do a thing about what's right and wrong today. You analyze politics, and you could do a better job than the politicians—if you tried. You talk like a radical and you act like a dope."

"Sure. The truth, seen through the stained glass window of eternity. They used to call it Harvard indifference, but it's broader than that."

"Brother, it's the whole academic world."

"You sound as though you'd like to get out of here."

"Not me. You ever teach in a high school?"

"No."

"Well. . . . That's you. Especially, you analyze yourself, but that's all you do—just analyze."

"Some day I'll tell you," Alec said, "how right you are."

"I got to go," Brewster said. "My kids are restless and it's a beautiful night, just fit for a riot."

"We had the riot."

"There you are," Brewster said from the stairs. "Is there any reason we can't have two riots?"

Alec smiled, as he watched Ted's bald spot move vaguely across the Yard. Darkness had come, and the rich trees leaned gently before the night wind. *A green and easy land*, Alec thought, *greener than Nebraska, easier than Nevada. . . . Ted's right—I have an uneasy, funny mind. There was no*

sound reason why, the first time I saw Mark and for the first time in years, I should remember Webb Carlson.

2

The windows in Sever Hall were open, the young men's eyes wandered to the windows, and Alec supposed their minds too had left the room, running out to the grass and the sun and the places they would be going to when every other course was ending as this one now was ending. *Nine months,* he thought, *nine months with them in this room and I know almost nothing about them.*

"Let's remember, then," his voice said quietly, "remember that the language is a beautiful thing and try to respect it even while we use it badly. This is true especially of the spoken language, about which we have said all too little here this year. I remind the young men from New England, for example, that there really is an *r* in such words as heart, car, horse. They may not care to pronounce it—a matter of personal idiosyncrasy with which I have no quarrel—but at least they should not look with amused scorn when people from the hinterlands do insist on pronouncing it.

"And here is something we all can learn, and learning it earn the right to call ourselves civilized—there's more to the world than Cambridge and the place where we spend our summers. Someone else's opinion might conceivably be of some importance besides our roommate's. Books we never heard of may contain more than the ones which pretty up our shelves. Forgive me if I digress—I shall not do so again this year." He waited briefly for a laugh. No one laughed.

"Come back to the words and the language. We are all craftsmen, or can be. Our material is the language, out of which we shape maybe a business letter, maybe an essay on the dietary habits of migratory birds for the Garden Club,

maybe a note to the milkman—perhaps the great American novel, or, glory of glories, the last and definitive history of Harvard College." No one smiled.

"Whatever it is, make it as good as you can. Let nothing go from your hands until you have done your best with it. In even plainer words, be—craftsmen."

He paused, glancing around at them. There was no sign they had heard him, or knew that he was there.

"Suppose we let it go at that."

He picked up his hat and his briefcase, paused at the door to shake hands with a boy who adored him because Alec had once told him his poems weren't bad although everything else he wrote was, pushed a cigarette into his mouth and went out into the dark corridor. Ted Brewster loped out of Room 8 and said, "Finis."

"Finis."

"Pack of dopes," Brewster said. "I didn't hear them applauding you."

"Did they you?"

"No, doc."

"They're not so dopey."

"No. You ever teach in a high school?" Brewster said. "Half of the kids can't even read."

"Does that surprise you?"

"Nope. What surprises me is the fact you don't get any time to teach them to read. Or anything. Not in a high school, not these days. You take attendance and collect money and sponsor clubs and make out reports and figure out marks and record them six or eight times and draw graphs and chaperone the Junior Prom and patrol the grounds and police the lunchroom and coach the ping-pong team and collect money and make out reports and copy marks and take attendance, but teach? Nope."

Alec laughed. "You're kidding."

"I am not kidding. Wait until your son goes to school. You'll see."

"I haven't got a son."

"Then go and beget one," Brewster said, "and I'll see you afterwards."

"Right." He waved to Ted and turned away towards Thayer, feeling suddenly light and free. Just a few days more to clean things up and he'd be through till September. Not a bad job, he thought, climbing the stairs—not a bad life at all.

Then he saw the envelope, an envelope with a long and somehow important-looking name engraved on its back, lying before his door.

3

The sign over the doorbell said: Jay Adams Brimmer.

Alec was reminded at once of houses in Georgetown which, like this, were unpretentious, even drab from the outside. Inside would be the quiet elegance which only years of accumulated wealth could produce. *Beacon Street,* his mind said, *here I come.*

To the butler he said, "Mr. Marwick." He wondered even while stepping into the dark hallway whether or not they really had wanted him to come. He stopped wondering, in the warmth of Mrs. Brimmer's greeting.

"Mr. Marwick, I'm so glad." She was a tall woman, taller than he was, with silver hair. "So nice of Caroline Standler to bring us together."

"Glad to be here." *And I wonder if she told you to look me up last fall too. Better not mention that.*

"This is my husband, Mr. Marwick."

Coming down the hall, Jay Adams Brimmer looked tall, too, with a black-gray mustache.

"Mr. Marwick. It's always a privilege to have a Harvard instructor in the house."

Alec glanced at him and saw with a start he wasn't kidding. They took him into a large room where sherry glasses were on a table. A chandelier, he remembered afterwards, and a grand piano near a draped window. "Where *is* that Faith?" Mrs. Brimmer said. "I think it's horrid of her to be always late for dinner."

"We will not wait for her," Mr. Brimmer said with a sort of affable firmness. "I fail to understand the younger generation sometimes, Mr. Marwick. I hope for your sake that you can."

"In my business," Alec grinned, "it's up to them to understand me."

"Ah, yes," Mrs. Brimmer said, "you teach at Harvard. And have you grown to know Professor Coolidge very well?"

Alec peered at her over his sherry glass. It would probably be impossible to explain that first-year instructors in English A didn't necessarily pal around with Professor Coolidge. "Not very well, I'm afraid."

Brimmer said, "I roomed two years in Hollis with old Coolidge."

"Jay was a member of the famous class of 1904, you know."

"Oh, yes," said Alec.

"In that class," Brimmer said as though reading from a book, "were such men as Cheever and MacInnes and Gorham, Farlow and——"

"And you, dear."

Mr. Brimmer smiled, and looked amusedly at Alec. "And they still shout Rinehart in the Yard, I trust?"

"Sure, I heard them just the other night. Quite a story."

"I remember you now," Brimmer said with a sudden de-

cisiveness. "You're the Westerner—you didn't go to Harvard."

"No, Father drifted out to Wisconsin and I landed in the University of Minnesota."

Mrs. Brimmer smiled. "So yours is the adventurous branch of Caroline's family."

"No," Alec said. "No. It was just that Father couldn't make much of a go of it in the East, so he tried somewhere else, that was all."

Mrs. Brimmer said, "That Faith, I do wonder——"

"Why," Mr. Brimmer said, "you've heard the story about Rinehart, haven't you, Francine?" Alec could see by her rather resigned look that she had, but Brimmer told it anyhow.

"Seems there was a boy named Rinehart who was so lonely at Harvard he used to stand under his own window and yell up to himself to come on out. Some of the fellows caught him at it one night and it's been a joke ever since."

After a moment of polite laughter, he went on, "Well, it's still a good old place. Abbott Lawrence made a better man than some of us thought he would." *That's President Lowell,* Alec thought, *you can't fool me this time.* "Perfectly sound in his opposition to the Child Labor Amendment. Imagine giving the federal government power to control the lives of little children. God knows what they'll think of next——"

"Faith!" Mrs. Brimmer exclaimed. "Really, my dear——"

She had come swiftly, quietly into the room. She too was tall and slender—her face a trifle too pale, perhaps, for that white dress. "Sorry, Mother."

"This is Mr. Marwick, Faith."

The quiet, perhaps haughty eyes studied him briefly. "How do you do?"

"Then we will go in without further delay," Mr. Brimmer said. "Mr. Marwick, I hope you have seen all there is to see in Boston."

"Sure, the Common and Faneuil Hall and the Old State House and the Old Howard and Jake Wirth's and the North Church, which is more than some Bostonians ever have. I did want to go to pops."

"You really must," Mrs. Brimmer said. Mr. Brimmer said, "Not quite on the same level with Koussevitzky, of course——" Faith said nothing. . . . *Pleasant people*, he thought afterwards. *The mother is pleasant because she is secure, sure of her place in the world. The father is pleasant at a dinner party; in business he would cut your throat if he had to. The daughter is pleasant in a reserved and slightly upstage way.*

Six days later, two days before he was to leave the college, he called them up. "I managed to get some tickets to pops. I wondered——"

"Mother and Dad are away for a week," Faith said.

"Oh."

"I'd be glad to go, if you want me."

Polite and disinterested. "That would be fine," he said.

After the concert, she asked him in to hear a pops recording of the ballet from Aïda, which he had liked. It never occurred to him to wonder about proprieties. After all, a child——

She played the record and turned toward him suddenly on the divan. Her open mouth was an inch from him. Her arms wound around his neck, her small breasts were against him.

So he bent to kiss her, or be kissed—feeling foolish because till now he'd half expected her to call him Uncle Alec. What he felt next was actual fright, as her mouth and body crushed violently, wildly, against his own.

He got up, bewildered, and reached for his hat. "Well——" Half leaning, half lying against the arm of the divan, she watched him go. Her eyes were laughing at him.

In his room, cleaning his desk, he found the letter at last.

"And Alec," Caroline Standler had written eight months ago, "if you get a chance I do hope you'll encourage Mark to see more of Faith Brimmer (you'll have to do it tactfully), she's such a sweet little girl. . . ."

Thoroughly, thoughtfully, Alec Marwick scratched his head.

O'MARA · FALL

I

He walked into City Hall, into the office of the Park department, as though he were walking to his death. He had no enthusiasm for this kind of work, and there might be more of it than he'd bargained for. But when he saw Felicia Zielinski standing there in the slanting, dust-filled light, the disappointments of a year and the discomfort of the hot June day fell from him as water falls. He went to her; there were others in the room—high school kids, a miscellany of middle-aged schoolteachers—but he didn't give them a look. "Hello."

"Oh, hello."

O'Mara stood as close to her as he could without pushing her over. Beneath her pink dress he could see the soft rise of her breasts. He wondered what would happen if he reached out right now and grabbed her. Very politely he said, "I didn't know you were going to work on the playgrounds."

"Didn't you? I'm a swimming instructor."

"Thought you were working in the store."

"I was. But this pays as well, and I'd like to be outdoors. I don't expect to be working after the summer anyhow."

"Oh." *God*, he thought, *every time I talk to her she gets me off on the damndest subjects. On the highest possible plane.* "Where are you going?"

That must be pride—that light in her eyes. "Mount Holyoke, I hope."

"Good." She turned her body toward the interior office. Her dress was cut low in back. She had a nice smooth back. O'Mara said, "I got gypped out of the scholarship."

"I know."

"I'm going to Harvard in the fall, though."

"Yes."

Well, so that covered that. "What are you doing tonight?"

"Taking care of the twins."

"How about tomorrow night?"

She moved restlessly. "Same thing. My mother's working nights."

Nights, hell. No one's working nights in this town. . . . Try again, O'Mara. Keep swinging. "Well, maybe I'll see you——"

A little man with glasses stuck his head through a doorway and said, "Special teachers this way, please."

Felicia jumped. "So long." She moved away as though someone were chasing her. Her dress fitted smoothly over her hips and her hips swung perceptibly sideways. *What an ass,* O'Mara thought admiringly, *what an ass.*

2

This damned Portugee town, his father said. *It's getting so a Portugee is better than a white man.*

O'Mara could remember the way the Old Man said that, with his right foot wiggling and his voice rising. It was the only way you could tell the Old Man was drunk—when his feet wiggled and he shot off his face. Sober, he scarcely spoke at all. He had read out the news item:

> The Women's Club announced today the annual scholarship awards for high school graduates. The winners are Joseph Sylvia, son of Mr. and Mrs. Manuel A. Sylvia, and

Felicia Zielinski, daughter of Mrs. Anna Zielinski and the late Mr. Zielinski.

You only made one mistake, his father told him, *you should have been born a Portugee.* And standing there, looking over his shoulder with a sudden sick ache in his stomach as though someone had kicked him, O'Mara still could realize the Old Man was drunk. His mother knew it too; she kept regarding him with nervous eyes all during supper, her face screwed up into a bunch of wrinkles, while O'Mara's two little sisters sat silent and embarrassed.

"What will you do now, Stevie?" the Old Man shouted.

"Get a job, I guess."

"I guess so, too, me boy."

"Stevie, Stevie," his mother said—her eyes were on the Old Man—"you never should have turned down that nice man who wanted you to go to Kansas Aggie and play football."

"I didn't want to go to Kansas Aggie."

"Not even if it was free," his mother said bitterly.

"He wants to go to Hawvud," the Old Man said, "where the Lowells only talk to the Cabots, and the Cabots only talk to the O'Maras." The Old Man laughed.

"I can earn my board and room working for Uncle Dennis in Wellesley. You said that. And I can work for a year first."

"Where will you work, Stevie?"

"I could try the mill."

"Don't try," his father said, "we're not hiring a soul."

"Then I don't know." But as usual it was his mother who had the answer.

"You'd better go see your brother Pat at the post office. Maybe he can get you in."

His brother Pat had gone to work when he was fourteen. Now he had two kids and a bald head. "What do you want to carry mail for, Stevie?"

"I got to save some money so I can go to college next year."

"All right. Only be sure you go." His brother scratched his green eyeshade thoughtfully. "Better go see Frank Madeira."

"What for? He's not the P. M."

"No, but he's pals with the P. M., and there's nothing you can do for the P. M. himself. There is for Madeira." Pat sighed wearily. "Now look, Stevie, these substitute jobs are given out politically and you've got to play it that way. It's going to be hard enough without you acting dumb about it."

"O.K. What do I tell Madeira?"

"Tell him you want to work for him in the election."

"Then what? How do I know he'll get me the job?"

"You don't." His brother turned back to his work. "You'll just have to trust the crook."

The sign on the door said: Frank Madeira, Attorney at Law. No law books were visible in the office. The red-headed girl in the outer room looked at him with a bored expression on her hard, painted face. "Yes?"

"I'd like to speak to Alderman Madeira." This girl made him feel nervous, he didn't know why.

She called her over her shoulder, "Frank, there's a kid here wants to see you."

O'Mara could feel the blood in his cheeks. *Kid!* But beneath his little mustache Madeira's face broke into a smile. . . . Afterwards, the Old Man didn't like his working for Madeira.

"It's nothing, Pa. All I do is drive a car on election day."

"I don't like it, I tell you."

"What's the matter with Madeira?"

The Old Man shrugged. He was loading his pipe, and he'd talked enough for that day. "What can you prove? Some

say he's the poor man's friend. Others say he's just a thief, with a little bootlegging on the side."

"That's all right—eh, Pa? What would we do without the bootleggers?" The Old Man, being quite sober, was not amused.

On election day O'Mara worked hard, driving a big Buick from seven in the morning till eight at night. Madeira or the girl would give him a slip of paper with an address, and O'Mara would drive voters from home to the polls and home again.

"These are mostly Portuguese people," Madeira told him. "If they don't understand what you're talking about, just say Frank Madeira sent you."

"Frank Madeira sent me." On Front Street, Belleville Avenue, Diman Street, the name worked like a charm. But every card stuck up in the back of the sedan said, "Tierney for Mayor," "Vote for Jim Tierney." . . .

"What's the idea," O'Mara asked another driver, "doesn't Madeira want to get elected himself?"

The driver laughed. "Sure, kid. But he ain't worrying. The Portugee are so proud of him they'd vote for him if he murdered his grandmother. And if he helps this other jockey out, he'll owe Frank something, see? Maybe Tierney'd get elected anyhow. But can he ever be sure of that?"

By seven o'clock Madeira had all the Portuguese names which had not been checked off on the voting lists, and he sent the drivers hurrying after them. In one house O'Mara found a poker game in progress and brought seven players in to vote for Madeira. . . . After the polls closed there was a crowded, triumphant meeting in the office. A big and florid man put his head in the doorway a moment and someone yelled, "Three cheers for Mayor-elect Tierney!" . . . Madeira brought out six quarts of Scotch, and for the first time in his life O'Mara tasted something besides gin.

A week later he was back. This time the red-headed girl merely jerked her thumb towards the inner office.

"Oh, hello there." Madeira's face brightened. "You're the guy who broke up the poker game. Say, I heard about that. How'd you ever get them to quit?"

"I had them deal me in. I won."

"Suppose you lost?"

"I was to pay them each a buck. I had thirty cents."

Madeira grinned. The grin faded. "Well, what do you want?"

"A substitute job in the post office."

Madeira's eyebrows lifted. "That's a pretty big pay-off."

"I'm worth it."

"It leaves you owing me something," Madeira said, "but—— Go see the P. M. in a day or so." He seemed to put the matter aside. "Say, I hear you're going to go to Harvard."

This Madeira. He seemed to know everything about everyone. "That's right."

"Well, come in to see me when you get out. Maybe you'll need a job."

"Thanks," said O'Mara.

He walked through the outer office. The redhead stood beside her desk arranging a vase of flowers. Passing behind her, O'Mara bent down and ran his hand well up her leg. He went out without looking back.

3

"You'll lose your religion if you go to Harvard," his mother told him.

Always the same old argument, always ending in the same old way, with tears and a concession.

"I don't see why you don't go to B. C. and study under the nice Jesuit priests."

"I don't want to go to B. C."

"Or Holy Cross—there's a nice Catholic school."

"I want to go to Harvard. I told you that."

His mother's face twisted with anxiety and grief. Her voice broke: "Then promise me you'll make the mission."

"All right, sure."

The mission was something extra and unusual. . . . He couldn't remember a time he hadn't gone to church. There must have been a time, but his mind could not recall it. Sunday school, first communion, confirmation—those he did remember: the long sleepy hours in the basement of the church, the bare walls, the tan benches, the black nuns, the blue cover of the catechism with a cross on it.

> Who made the world?
> God made the world.
>
> Who is God?
> God is the creator of heaven and earth, and of all things.

At first he was afraid in church, because the altar was big and he was so small, and the colored windows made the church dark and the priests were big black men whose very kindness made him tremble. And he was so wicked. Before he was nine and learned about confession and communion, he never knew quite how wicked he was. By the time he was fourteen he realized he was filthy with sin.

The prayer book had two lists to be used as reminders before confession. One was a list of mortal sins, any one of which could send you to hell forever, if you died with it on your soul. The others were venial sins, not so bad, but sins nevertheless. And the rules seemed so hard: if you willfully thought about committing a sin you had committed it. If you had a dirty thought and put it out of your mind at once, that was not a sin, but if you kept the thought, played with it a

while, enjoyed it, and then cast it aside and did nothing about it, that was a sin. That was a mortal sin. . . .

O'Mara would sit in the dark pew, writhing, while the shutter of the priest's confessional slid open and shut and his own turn came nearer and nearer. *Did I do this? Did I do that? Did I really undress my English teacher in my mind? Yes. Yes. Yes. Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.*

But after it was over and he was out in the sun again, he felt lighter and cleaner than he had ever been since the last time. And once Father Dineen asked him if he wouldn't like to be an altar boy, so he couldn't be the worst kid in the parish. O'Mara went to church three afternoons that week and said the stations of the Cross, but it wasn't any use. On the fourth day he headed for the ball field. Standing there in the fresh clean air and the sun he forgot mortal sin, and original sin, and what happened to babies who died before they were baptized, and what would happen to you if you died before you could make an Act of Perfect Contrition. And he saw he didn't have it. He went to church when he was supposed to and to communion whenever his mother got after him, or the gang was going, or it was Easter and he hadn't made his duty. But he didn't have it like Pimples Sliney, who was off studying to be a priest, or Anna Gaule, who had gone into a convent and could never enter her father's house again. "No," he told Father Dineen, "I'm sorry." The old priest regarded him sadly, and O'Mara felt filthy again.

But on Saturday no one ever said, "Are you going to Mass tomorrow?" Everyone said, "What Mass are you going to?" and if you missed the Irish church at 10.30 you could go to the Polack church at 11 or the Frog church at 11.30 and hear a sermon in Polish or French. The Mass, of course, was in Latin. O'Mara's mind wandered. He thought of the baseball game yesterday, or dreamed one up—himself stealing bases and incredibly catching flies, coming up in the ninth with two

on and hitting a long hard one to right, and the crowd yelling, the girls waving. Sometimes there was a girl a pew or two away, and he looked her over, wondering who she was. He thought of bright things to say to her—by the end of Mass he was deep in love with her. Then everyone got up, the girl disappeared, and O'Mara never saw her again. . . . Every once in a while the congregation stood up or sat down or knelt—it was never in one posture for long. O'Mara found that annoying, in the midst of a spectacular baseball game.

But the mission was different. No one ever slept through a mission sermon.

The tall priest looked out confidently at his audience. They were all men, since the women had had their mission last week. They were all single men, since for this particular talk the married men were segregated in the basement. O'Mara wriggled expectantly, as the tall priest raised his right hand.

" 'There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. A generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness.' Words taken from Proverbs, 30th chapter, verses 11 and 12. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The men blessed themselves. The priest looked at them—gazing around the church as though he had never been here before. A deep quiet fell. Oh, these mission fathers could talk! It took a long time to get used to the old parish priests after a mission was through.

" 'There is a generation . . .' Those words are true of this generation." He stared at them again. "Or do you think because we are priests we don't know what is going on in this city? Or that we are ashamed to speak of it? Do you think we don't know what goes on in the cars parked beside the roads—or in the rooms up over your rotten speakeasies—or

even, God help us, right out in public in those bawdy houses, miscalled dance halls—to the accompaniment of music?

"Do you think we don't know about the contraceptives you buy in the drugstores, or make the girls carry in their handbags? Oh, yes, we know. . . . This is a foul and filthy generation, and from masturbation to abortion it has committed every sin in the books. Night after night we've seen you—cruising up and down the streets, chasing after every girl you see—like a pack of hounds after a bitch. . . . And if we can see you, be sure that God can see you.

"But you think you're smart. You say, 'Oh, we'll take our fun where we find it, we only live once.' In the words of a damnable heathen poem—which, I understand, is actually on the required reading list in non-Catholic colleges—you say, 'Ah, take the cash and let the credit go.'

"But I wonder if you really are so smart." The priest's voice lowered, became calm and thoughtful. "Because, you know, you actually don't live only once. You live twice. And let us say that in this world you live a hundred years. That is a long, long time. But it is a measured time. There is an end to it.

"Now let us imagine something.

"Imagine a sandy beach ten miles wide and a hundred miles long. And imagine that once in every hundred years a sparrow comes, and takes a grain—a single grain—of the sand from that beach in his mouth and flies away. How long would it take the sparrow to carry away all that beach of sand?

"Men, the time it would take him would not be a second, not a fraction of a second, in the eternity of hell."

His voice thundered. " 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire. . . .' Those are not my words. Those are the words of Almighty God.

"And so for half an hour of pleasure with some wretched

girl—ah, yes, maybe a good deal less than half an hour—you are willing to trade an eternity in hell. That does not seem so smart to me!

"And it may be that even in this world you are none too bright." He leaned over the pulpit toward them. "Have you ever observed a man afflicted with syphilis, my friends? —the paralyzed limbs, the sightless eyes, the stricken brain? . . . No? Then let me describe him. . . ."

That was not the last sermon, but it was the one O'Mara remembered. On Sunday he went to communion with the other men. On Monday someone in the post office was telling a dirty joke. O'Mara walked away.

On Tuesday he was delivering mail on Front Street. A blonde woman opened a door and said, "Oh, are you the mailman? I'm new here—all by my little self. I wonder if you'd care to come in and tell me about the neighborhood?"

She was about thirty, with a plump figure and a laugh in her eyes.

O'Mara could feel his blood rising. He shook his head. "I—I'm pretty busy today."

On Wednesday another carrier stepped on a letter O'Mara had dropped. O'Mara said, "For Christ's sake, watch what you're doing——" And now he was no longer without sin. Somehow he felt relieved. On Friday the plump blonde was in the doorway again.

This time she pouted at him. "Still too busy, I suppose?"

O'Mara grinned. "Not *that* busy." He shut the door behind him.

4

In the spring the regular carriers seemed forever healthy—O'Mara was working less and less. He asked Frank Madeira

for another job, and Madeira sent him down to the Park department. O'Mara was hired as a playground instructor.

The job was dull. Every morning he set up the swings and see-saws, every afternoon he dismantled them. In between he tried to keep the boys busy with games. That was easy enough in the morning, though in the hot afternoons they had a tendency to gather in the shade and tell dirty stories. O'Mara learned some good ones.

The only bright day was Wednesday, when Felicia Zielinski came to take the children swimming. His associate all the rest of the week was a Miss Connors, a schoolteacher aged between thirty-five and fifty years. Beside her Felicia seemed so fresh and beautiful that he was actually nervous. Every week he looked forward to her coming, and every week the story was the same.

"Doing anything tonight?"

"Uh huh."

"Tomorrow night?"

"You're awfully persistent, aren't you?"

"About you, yes." By this time Miss Connors would come nosing around, pretending not to listen, breaking her ears listening, and scowling like a witch at Felicia.

"I'm sorry." And Felicia would smile, trying to be kind—next she'd be telling him she would be a sister to him. He took a step toward her. She took a step away. *Jesus, I couldn't do much to you right here, could I?*

"No soap, huh?"

"No soap." By that time the little brats would be all rounded up, and she would smile at them, put her delectably rounded arms about a couple of nearby Portugees, and off she'd go.

I'll have to change the technique, O'Mara was thinking. *It can't be that bastard Standler. He's up at Ogunquit, dunking his lily white chassis in the ice water.*

The next time Felicia came, he didn't ask for a date. He had received his letter from Mr. Pennypacker, saying he had been admitted to Harvard, and he brought it out and showed it to her.

"Pretty good, huh?"

"Yes. Congratulations, Steve."

He tried to sound high-minded and serious. "Of course I'll have to work pretty hard."

"Yes, of course."

She looked prettier than ever. He knew she was wearing nothing but a bathing suit under her dress, but he sat a good three feet away from her. And if Miss Connors overheard this particular conversation, he didn't care at all.

"But I think college is worth it—don't you?"

He expected her to brighten up at that, but she only nodded.

"A college degree really counts for something these days."

Miss Connors was still scowling at them. Poor woman, must be astigmatism.

"Of course," O'Mara said philosophically, "it takes a lot out of you too. But then in the end it's worth it."

"Yes."

Well, that's where I came in. He glanced at her. She was staring down at her sneakers. Then all the little Portugees and Polacks and Frogs were whooping up the walk.

"Well," Felicia said, "so long"—and she smiled in a vague sort of way. O'Mara sat and dismally watched her go. *Strike two.*

Miss Connors' sour face was in front of him.

"Stephen O'Mara," she demanded, "don't you know any better than that?"

"What?"

Her voice rose indignantly: "Talking to that poor girl about college——"

"Well, why not?"

"When she tells me her mother's just lost her job—and she'll have to stay home and support the family and can't ever use her scholarship!"

O'Mara closed his eyes. *Strike three.* His voice was choked: "Miss Connors, would you do me a favor?"

"Yes?"

"Boot me."

Miss Connors rose briskly.

"Bend over," she said.

5

He wished his saddle shoes weren't quite so bright and shining, that was all. His Uncle Dennis and Aunt Margaret were regarding him with pop-eyed surprise.

"Is that the kind of a dude rig they wear at Harvard?" his uncle demanded.

O'Mara glanced down at his flannel trousers. Well, they'd be baggy soon. And he had paid thirteen dollars for his sport coat, though he had told his mother five. He nodded. "Today's the first day."

His uncle's face was stern. "Remember, I expect you to be at the store at six. Your aunt will see you have your supper first. And then to stay till you lock up. And all day Saturday, of course."

"O. K."

"You don't think I'm sweatin' you?"

"Golly, no! I guess I couldn't go at all if I couldn't live with you."

"All right, then. Run along now, don't miss your train. Though why you want to go to that A. P. A. place I don't know."

"That what?"

"A. P. A. place."

"What's that mean?"

Uncle Dennis smiled wryly at his wife. "He don't know. . . . Run along, my boy. You'll find out."

The 8.11 came from Framingham. After stopping at Wellesley Hills, Wellesley Farms and Riverside, it reached Boston at 8.44. There O'Mara went down into the subway and took a train to Cambridge. A sign said: "Out to Harvard Square and College Yard."

A swift exultation swept him. *I'm here!* he thought, *I've made it.* . . . It was 9 o'clock, and all the bells were ringing, when he walked into the Yard.

A tall man with elbow patches showed him the way to Memorial Hall.

"Just go right across the Yawrd here, past Stoughton and Hollis. You can't miss it—it's that ghastly Gothic pile."

In the dim auditorium a boy was checking names. "Stephen J. O'Mara," O'Mara said loudly, and he glanced quickly about, for perhaps someone here had played ball against him or seen his name on the sport pages.

No one looked up. The boy put a check beside his name and silently handed him an envelope.

In it were cards and papers that took an hour to fill out. He deposited them at the other end of the hall and walked out. No one had spoken to him yet, but a chorus of voices attacked him as he blinked in the sun.

"Here you are, sign up for the *Crimson.*"

"Right here for laundry service."

"I'll take your subscription to the *Lampoon,* brother. Everyone subscribes to the *Lampoon.*"

"Here you are, best laundry in the Square."

O'Mara pushed past them, but a poster caught his eye:

FRESHMEN MEETING
ALL CLASS MEMBERS INVITED

SPEAKERS:

The President
Varsity Football Coach
Freshman Football Coach
President of *Crimson*
Dean of Freshmen
Captain of Varsity Football

ENTERTAINMENT
REFRESHMENTS
HARVARD UNION EIGHT P. M.

Next he had to see his adviser. . . . His adviser, who was in the English department, took a pipe from his mouth and shook his head. "Sorry, I'll have to ask you to come back at three."

It was now ten. "You couldn't make it before then?"

The man glanced at a list of names. "Sorry." O'Mara strolled over to the library. It'd be a good idea to get a library card right away.

The girl at the desk said, "Have you a bursar's card?"

"What's that?"

"A card you get after you pay your bill."

"Oh, I haven't paid it yet."

"When you do, you'll get a bursar's card and then I can give you a library card."

"O. K." He wasn't worrying. He had enough saved to pay his tuition now and in November. By January he ought to have a scholarship. He glanced at the clock up on Memorial. Ten-ten.

He dodged across Massachusetts Avenue through the traf-

fic. A sign said: "Eat." Pasted on the window was a typewritten notice: "Kickers at 9. Squad at 9.30."

There was an idea! He'd kill a little time at football practice. Wood and Tichnor and Mays, they'd all be there. But down the street and over the river, the man at the gate beside the stadium waved his hand. He waved it in a discouraging downward manner, but O'Mara didn't get it.

The man had to call out, "Can't come in."

O'Mara walked up to the gate. "I just want to see the practice."

"Sorry."

"But I'm a student here."

The man gave him a single bored glance. "I don't care what you are. *You can't come in.* Speak English, don't you?"

Yeah, and French, and a little Portugee, and a lot of Polack, O'Mara was thinking. *And back there I'd punch your bastardly face for you, but up here if I did it maybe they wouldn't give me a bursar's card.*

He turned on his heel. . . . It was late enough for lunch by the time he got back to the Square. In the cafeteria across from the Yard he carried his tray to a table which seated four. He had it all to himself. Other students were there, most of them alone, but he didn't know them. The bus girl rested her trays on his table a moment. O'Mara said, "Nice day, huh?" The girl looked frightened.

He still had two hours to kill. He walked up the Avenue and back, strolled through the Coop, walked through the Yard to the library, read three magazines, walked over to the little yellow building where his adviser was and sat on the steps. Two boys came along the walk from Quincy Street. One was saying, "Saw him up in Bar Harbor. He's living in Lowell House and his sister . . ." They glanced at O'Mara, looked away. ". . . awfully nice . . . goes to Smith." Somewhere a clock chimed two.

O'Mara was through with his adviser at three-thirty. He was going to take English A, German A, History 1, English 28, Geology 4. He walked through the Yard again, caught the subway to Boston and a train home. At six he was in his uncle's store.

At seven he was busy selling bananas. At eight he happened to look at the clock. *Eight o'clock? Oh. Freshman meeting, Harvard Union, eight p.m.* . . . He sat down behind the counter and stared at his saddle shoes. He rubbed his hands on the floor and rubbed the dirt into the shoes. A man came in and yelled, "Hey, kid, you got any Edgeworth?" "Yes, sir," said O'Mara.

6

After a month at Harvard he knew three students.

Ed Sullivan came from Worcester, an hour and a half each way on the train. He called conductors and trainmen by their first names. Phil Reisberg rode the streetcars in from Roxbury, and knew all there was to know about Harvard.

Eating lunch with Reisberg in Liggett's, O'Mara confided, "I've got to get a scholarship to stay in."

Reisberg shrugged. "What's hard about that? I'm getting one for four hundred."

"What do you have to do?"

"Just make the Dean's list. All B's or better."

"That German A is tough."

Reisberg nodded. "Of course. What some of the guys do is get a trot at the Widow's."

"What?"

"Gosh, didn't you ever hear of the Widow's? What they call the tutoring schools. They sell translations—trots, ponies. Or if you're going tough in History they'll spot the exam questions for you."

"Must cost money."

"Oh, sure, that's what it's for—these rich bastards that go to Bermuda or play poker all term. And the trouble with the trots is, half the time they're inaccurate."

"Did you ever buy one?"

"Hell, no!" Reisberg bit fiercely into his ham sandwich. "I sell 'em," he said.

The third person he knew was Mark Standler. Standler lived down in Dunster House. Somehow O'Mara always felt uncomfortable in his presence. He met Mark once in the gym, and walked up to the library with him just as classes were changing. And it was amazing, the number of persons Standler knew. He seemed to be speaking to every boy coming down Holyoke Street: "Hi, Mac," "Hi, Red," "'Lo, Brian. . . ."

O'Mara didn't know a soul. He trudged along sullenly, his face flaming red. At Wadsworth House, Standler said, "Wait a sec, will you?" and when he came out O'Mara was ready.

As they continued through the Yard, O'Mara waited till each group was almost upon them. Then he looked up quickly, called out confidently, "Hi, there!" They would either answer dubiously or with bewildered stares he hoped Standler didn't notice. . . . Once he waved at a boy on a path twenty yards away, and the boy waved back. . . . There were four or five others whom he spoke to, and who spoke to him, when he saw them in Bolyston Library or in Liggett's. But the only three he really knew were Sullivan, Reisberg and Standler.

The fact that you were in class with a boy didn't mean you knew him. There was F. A. Osler, for example, who because of the alphabet sat beside O'Mara in History 1 and English 28. The first time O'Mara ran into him in the Yard, O'Mara opened his mouth to speak. Osler looked at him, looked away. O'Mara closed his mouth.

There was Hugh De Barsy. Every Thursday from 1 to 4, in the stuffy, dreary Geology lab, De Barsy spent most of his time copying verbatim what O'Mara had in his notebook. But he never spoke to O'Mara.

The instructors were friendliest. Fritz Heinrecker, section man in German A, called O'Mara to his desk after the October hour exams.

"You haff more sense than this, Mr. O'Mara." Heinrecker's eyes were almost invisible behind his thick lenses. "Why do you not do what you can do?"

O'Mara shrugged. He almost strained his neck trying to see what Heinrecker had written on his blue book. *Jesus, a C—. And I'm supposed to be getting a scholarship.*

He blurted, "Of course, you know a lot of these guys use trots. I don't."

"*Ja.* But they will never love the language that way. You will, O'Mara. Or hate it." Mr. Heinrecker grinned. "Come up to my room some night and we will drink in some American beer and German language. A lot of beer and a little language, *ja?*"

O'Mara couldn't go any place at night but he felt better. Another instructor he liked was Mr. Marwick of English A. Mr. Marwick really made something out of his conferences, not like that fairy in English 28 who just smoked cigarettes and fidgeted and looked at him as though he were some kind of worm only the vulgar necessity of earning a living made tolerable. . . . Mr. Marwick took an interest in him.

"That's a pretty good football story, O'Mara."

"Thanks, sir."

"You must play yourself."

"Some, yes."

"Go out this year?"

"No. You see, I have to get a scholarship and I thought I'd better study this year and go out next year after I'm all set."

Mr. Marwick nodded and tossed the manuscript aside. "I know some people up in your town. The Standlers."

"Oh, yes." *Jesus,* O'Mara thought, *he must be a snoot after all.*

"More or less casually, you understand."

"Oh."

"It's quite a marvelous town, O'Mara."

"Yes, I guess so, sir." *What the hell is marvelous about it?*

"Only," Mr. Marwick said, "it's diseased. From the neck up. The only people with life and brains—the immigrants—won't save it, because they don't run it. The hand of death is going to touch it some day."

"It's touched it already, I guess, sir."

"That could be." Mr. Marwick, giving him back his manuscript, grinned. "Come in any time."

"Thank you." . . . He walked lightly, elated, down the stairway of the House. He had a friend. The workman scrubbing the stairway stepped aside.

"Excuse me, sir."

Startled, O'Mara jumped. He just couldn't get used to having workmen call him "sir."

He strolled leisurely up Holyoke Street. He had missed the 3:30 train. He'd kill some time in Widener. On Massachusetts Avenue was a swift line of traffic and students were waiting for it to clear. One was F. A. Osler. O'Mara waited in the gutter beside him. The cars going toward Boston were all past. Osler took a step forward.

O'Mara had seen it happen before. A car swung out from Holyoke Street towards them, fast, cutting the corner. Osler took half another step forward. O'Mara grabbed him, pulled him back. The car shot past. . . . Half an hour later, O'Mara was walking down the library steps as Osler was walking up. Osler didn't speak to him. O'Mara would have been surprised if he had.

On Sunday he closed the store at noon and had dinner with Uncle Dennis and Aunt Margaret.

"What are you studying, now?" his uncle asked.

"Oh, English A and German A and History 1——"

"History 1, is it? History of what?"

"Europe."

"Indeed. Then, of course, you've heard about Robert Emmet—him that the English murdered in cold blood?"

O'Mara frowned. "I don't think so."

"Or Roger Casement, now, that they murdered likewise? Or James Connolly? Or Padraic Pearse?"

"I don't think we've got that far, Uncle Dennis."

His uncle laughed bitterly. "Nor will you. As if those left-handers would tell you about Emmet or Connolly! And what do they say about the Catholics, my boy?"

"They don't say much about religion. It's just history, see."

"Oh? Nor the Pope neither?"

"Well, just insofar as he takes part in politics."

Uncle Dennis dropped his fork with a clatter. He glared at Aunt Catherine. "Do you hear that? They call the Pope a dirty politician, the blackhearts!"

Aunt Catherine shook her head. "If your poor mother knew what she's spending her good money on." She gazed dolefully at O'Mara.

He wriggled uncomfortably. "I didn't say they called him a politician."

"They said he took part in politics, didn't they? And what is that but a politician?" Uncle Dennis waved his knife angrily. "The Pope a dirty politician!"

He chewed for a moment in an indignant silence. "And I bet the kikes like that. The place is full kikes, they tell me."

"Oh, there aren't so many." Actually he had seemed to see quite a few Jewish boys hanging around Bolyston Library during lunch hour, as he did, because there was nowhere else to go.

"Not many kikes? Why, everyone knows they're getting so they run the place!" His uncle stared at him as though he were an imbecile. "You don't know much about your own school, do you, my boy?"

O'Mara flushed. "You just said yourself it was the Protestants ran it."

"They did," Uncle Dennis said calmly, "until the kikes came along." He speared a piece of corned beef. "Did you go out for football now?"

"No, I thought I'd wait."

"It's just as well. You'd not have a chance anyhow."

"What do you mean?"

"What do I mean?" Uncle Dennis shook his head hopelessly at his wife. "Him, with the name O'Mara, and what do I mean, he says! Why, everyone knows an Irishman can't play football for Harvard!"

"Oh, I don't think that's true."

"An Irishman can never play football for Harvard."

"Well, look, there was Eddie Casey. And Ned Mahan and Gilligan and——"

"Sure. And why did they let them play? Because they had to—their team would have been no good without them!" Uncle Dennis yelled triumphantly. "Not otherwise would they have let them, the blackhearts! . . ."

"Ah, no," his uncle sighed. "They're always down on the Irish." He speared his last piece of corned beef. "The narrow, black, intolerant bigots," he said.

8

His first term bill had been due September 30. He had paid it. His second term bill was due November 30. He paid it. The next one would be due January 30.

Two days after he came back from the Christmas holidays, he had a letter from his mother.

"Dear Stevie," it said. (It was, as usual, in an awkward, pencilled script.) "We did not want to tell you this during Christmas but your father has not been working since the first of December. We thought we might be able to keep on sending you money somehow, but I guess not. I am sorry, you will have to pay your own carfare and books now etc., if you can. Stevie I do hope you will be able to stay on in college and work hard but you will have to find some way of doing it yourself. . . ."

The college employment office didn't think much of his working in the morning, he was already working in the afternoon. He told Reisberg about it. Reisberg knew everything.

"Think nothing of it," said Reisberg. "I get plenty of spending money and I don't work either."

"What do you do, sell bootleg hooch?"

"No. Blood."

"Oh."

"The hospitals give you twenty-five dollars a pint. You can only do it once in two months."

"Why?"

"They take your name and they have a sort of clearing house, so you can't go back too soon. Of course," Reisberg said, "that wouldn't prevent you from giving a phony name."

"No."

"But you wouldn't want to."

"No." . . . He went to the hospital in Cambridge the

week before his first exam. They pricked his thumb and told him they'd put him on the list.

"But——" *Jesus,* he was thinking, *I'll be out of lunch money tomorrow.* "Can't I donate?"

"We don't need your type right now. We'll let you know."

"O.K." That night he stole a loaf of bread and a can of meat from his uncle's store and made himself some sandwiches. He knew his aunt would pack him a lunch if he asked her, but this way he felt more self-respecting.

Four days later the hospital called him up. He lay on a table beside an unconscious girl and watched a pint of his blood disappear into her. O'Mara felt like crying. The hospital gave him a check for twenty-five dollars.

That night in the store he felt weak, ate two bananas, and threw up.

This was January 19. On January 30 he didn't pay his term bill. Words kept coming into his mind, cold, final words taken from the Official Register of Harvard University:

> Any student whose indebtedness to the University remains unpaid on the date fixed for payment is deprived of the privileges of the University until he is reinstated. . . .

His exams varied. History 1 was hard, English A was easy, Geology 4 was hard, English 28 was stupid. The night before each of them, he locked the store and sat with the lights on, refusing to answer when customers knocked. Someone told his uncle and his uncle gave him hell.

His marks came in, written on the backs of postcards. History—B. Geology—C. English 28—B. English A—A.

That left German, and he had to get a B. He had done only half the translations. He could buy a trot of the entire course for ten dollars.

Two days before the exam, he went over to Massachusetts General and registered as a blood donor.

The girl said, "Type?"

"Four."

"Good. We can use you today. Name?"

"Edward Sullivan, Worcester, Mass."

She didn't look up. "Next room, please." . . .

The exam made him nervous. Too much was at stake. He looked around at the dark, ugly little room in Sever, the carved benches, the quiet face of Mr. Heinrecker. *Hey*, he thought with sudden panic, *I may never be in this room again.*

The German script wavered before his eyes. He picked it up, brought it closer. His mind seemed to stop as a watch stops. He couldn't get it going again. He was trying to recall the trot in his pocket—he'd been studying it just a minute before the exam started. *Christ, if I could only pull it out right now.* . . . He blinked at the exam sheet.

> Wütend sprang der Blutende in die Höhe und gab seinem Lehrling eine schallende Ohrfeige.

What the hell?

Fountain pens were scratching all about him. He brought his own out, looked at it dubiously. . . . It seemed only a moment before someone began stamping his feet and the rest took it up. A tall boy with glasses was tossing his book on Mr. Heinrecker's desk, was walking out. *The bastard was through already.* . . .

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Heinrecker, "the examination will close in five minutes."

His stomach turned over and over. *Das Dorf war nämlich die Nacht über zugeschneit gewesen* . . . Perspiration fell on his book, spreading the ink. "Gentlemen, the examination is over!" . . . *so wie der Schnee zusammengeschmolzen war* . . .

Mr. Heinrecker was walking around taking the bluebooks away from those who'd pretended not to hear. O'Mara took a postcard from his pocket, wrote, "Exam mark, term mark," and tucked it into his bluebook. Mr. Heinrecker smiled at him vaguely, through a sort of dim haze. *Auf Weidersehen, Herr Heinrecker, oder lebewohl.*

He reached the corridor. Boys were converging on him from all sides and a sharp voice said, "The sonofabitch asking a question like that," and the light in the corridor abruptly dimmed. He was falling. The floor disappeared beneath him and the world was black.

9

His aunt handed him the postcard. "It don't make sense," she said.

The address was in his own writing. On the other side his scrawl was complemented with another:

Exam mark: C+

Term mark: B—

Good old Mr. Heinrecker, he'd dragged him through. . . .

"I'm on the Dean's list!"

"Oh," his aunt said, and looked disappointed. That night he traded one of the pipes in his uncle's store for a quart of red wine. Never before had he been so happy or so sick.

Three days later, on Saturday, the letter came. He remembered that moment as long as he lived—his uncle coming into the store, something white in his hand, the piles of bright oranges, the fly banging himself against the window, the way he tore across the words "Dean of Harvard College" as he opened it.

Dear Mr. O'Mara:

I regret very much to inform you that because of the large number of applicants we are unable to award you the scholar-

ship for which you have applied. We want you to know that we appreciate your excellent academic record, and trust you will be able to make a financial arrangement which will permit you to continue in the college.

He had never gone to see a dean before. . . . "Golly," O'Mara said, "I thought if I got on the Dean's list——"

"I know, Mr. O'Mara. But unfortunately about 140 others on the list applied for scholarships and didn't get them either."

"Oh." He stared at the dean's big feet. Size 12, must be. "What I don't see is how you found anyone who needed it more than I do."

The only emotion on the dean's face was a tiny, controlled flicker of surprise. "Of course, we don't award scholarships primarily on the basis of financial need, but on academic accomplishment."

"I see." O'Mara stood up. The dean stood up—tall, big-boned, well fed. "Thank you, sir."

"Not at all." The dean smiled. "Come in again."

"Yeah," said O'Mara.

The girl in the library coatroom looked at him in bewilderment when he handed her the book. It was *The Memoirs of the Duke of Saint Simon on the Reign of Louis XIV and the Regency*, Vol. 1.

"Books are returned upstairs, sir."

"I know," O'Mara said, "but I'm tired. And I don't like the pictures on the way. Will you see that they get it, babe?"

He walked across the Yard towards Warren House. He would have liked to see Mr. Heinrecker but he never had found out where he lived. Beyond Mr. Marwick's office door he could hear someone moving. He raised his hand.

He kept it raised. What would he say? What could he say? What good would it do to say anything?

He lowered his hand silently, went down the stairs and

out to Quincy Street. On Massachusetts Avenue he hurried, circling the Yard. He dropped a dime expertly into the subway slot, shoved the turnstile with his hip, ran for the train. The guard said, "How yuh today?"

"O. K." He said swaying with the familiar motion, breathing in the familiar odor. He had the stations by heart: Harvard, Central, Kendall, Park, Washington. At South Station he got off, and stood watching a moment as the train disappeared.

He turned slowly toward the escalator. A queer tightness was in his throat; he felt bereft, and utterly sad.

He was going to miss the subway.

FELICIA · SPRING

I

If you believed the calendar, Easter Saturday was late that year. Still on the cold street, outside her cold room, Felicia could see the snow running away from the wind.

Her flesh was lightly touched with blue as she sat, naked, shivering, on her bed. She held a stocking up to the light and examined it critically. There were two theories about stockings: If you put them on first you might be so sleepy you'd tear them; if you put them on last, you might be in such a hurry you'd tear them. A gamble, either way.

Felicia was putting the precious things on first.

Out in the kitchen she could hear her mother moving about. Mother still got up at five o'clock; half the housework would be done by now.

"*Felicia, śniadanie!*"

"*Tak, tak.*" . . .

Mother said, "Easter, the happy time."

Felicia shook her head.

"Easter is always happy," Mother insisted, a little absently, as she looked around for Stephen and Stanley—no one but Mother called them Stefan and Stanislaw now. "They have been stealing from the holy basket."

"Oh, Ma!"

Mother shook her head despairingly. It had always been hard to convince the boys that the Easter basket must be blessed before one could rightfully eat from it. She tucked

the napkin over the food—boiled eggs, sausage, ham, dark bread, sweet bread, candy—and handed it carefully to Felicia.

"Now take it to the priest and straight home again."

Felicia almost laughed in her face. Mother had been saying those same grave words to her every Easter Saturday since she was a little girl. Leave it to Mother, and no one would ever grow up. "Yes, Ma."

The wind climbed her legs. . . . Felicia swung the basket expertly beside her knee. This basket was heavy once. *When I come to the park I will shift it to my left hand. How many times,* she thought, *how many times.*

A strange custom, in which we differ from others. She was old enough now to see that, though Mother still sent her with the holy basket. *On Thanksgiving we eat pork chops, for that is not a day of ours.*

She remembered explaining once to Mr. Sikorski about Thanksgiving. He had been reading a Polish-language handbook for new citizens, but remained a bit puzzled about the "Peelgrims."

"This Thanksgiving Day, just why is that?"

"Well, it was started by the Pilgrims, Mr. Sikorski. Americans sort of keep it up in memory of them."

"And they were?"

"People who came over on the Mayflower—a ship."

"Oh, came in a ship." Mr. Sikorski did not look impressed.

"They landed on Plymouth Rock."

"I landed on Hoboken."

"Yes. You see, they had a great deal of hardship to face after they got here."

Mr. Sikorski nodded. "I can understand that, of course." He looked at her expectantly.

"Well, they—there were a lot of savages that made it

"Ah, yes," Mr. Sikorski said feelingly; "the savages."

hard for them."

"Don't you see, Mr. Sikorski—they were the *first* to come."

"I see." Mr. Sikorski tried politely not to seem disappointed. "So that is why we honor them. Yes."

Or sometimes on Thanksgiving we have hamburg. . . . She was at the parish house now, with the basket in her left hand. Automatically she must have changed it as she passed the park.

The priest said in Polish, "You are early, Felicia."

"Yes, Father."

He blessed the basket. She handed him the dollar—crisp, neatly folded. "Thank you, Felicia. And your mother is well?"

"Yes, Father."

"And the twins?"

"Yes, Father, thank you."

The bottom step had a loose nail, third from left. . . . *How many times, and the first time I was a little girl in white stockings and with a ribbon in my hair. And I was afraid.*

The way back was always colder. From across the park the wind would drive at her, push her back. The basket was big for a little girl, and getting bigger. She would turn to the left, to the right, turn her back on the wind, and her nose ran. Children were skating in the park but she had no skates.

How large the streetcars seemed! Large and green and of a frightening noise. To the left was the French church, though not a church really—just a cellar with a roof over it. When the French had enough money they would build the rest. And once, going by the French church, she thought, *This is me. I am all there is of me. I alone. I will always be alone.* . . . That was a funny way to feel.

Mother always said, *Never speak to strangers.* It was hard to think of the men in front of the stores along the Avenue as strangers, because they were always the same ones, always

there—bums, Mother called them, though the way she said it, it came out "bumps."

No, they were not strangers, because they always said "Hello, Skinny," every time she went by. But Mother had said never to speak to them, so Felicia just smiled at them instead.

Then she'd be glad to see her street, for by now her legs would be aching and she'd urgently need to go to the bathroom. The street was where she couldn't get lost, where she knew everyone, even the Portuguese and French people. The houses were all alike—three stories, painted gray. But she always knew her own. She would go up the back stairs, into the hallway, into the kitchen, and Mother would be there.

She went up the back stairs, into the hallway, into the kitchen, and Mother was there. But today it wasn't quite the same, for she had to say, "Ma, I'm going to the store now."

"First you must eat." Her breakfast was on the table—prunes, two eggs, toast, coffee.

"Ma, all I do is sell ladies' underwear. I don't drive a truck."

"If you work, you must eat." Mother looked down at her own hands, folded on the table. Her hands were whiter, softer. "If you don't work, like me, you have no right to eat."

"Oh, Ma!" Her voice was bright. "Maybe they'll send for you today."

Mother shook her head dismally.

"Oh, Ma." . . . Mother insisted on holding her coat for her, finding her rubbers, getting her started. Felicia never liked that bewildered look in Mother's eyes as she watched her daughter go off to earn their living. "Take it easy, Ma." . . . By ten o'clock Mother would have all the housework done, and the rest of the day before her.

The streetcar was never crowded these days. Felicia moved

toward the back, as she'd habitually done when in high school. The sight of Mr. Francois, a gray little man, made her feel better. A quarter before nine in the morning, a quarter past six at night, year in and year out, Mr. Francois was on the streetcar. Others might lose their jobs, but Mr. Francois went on forever.

With a shy little smile, as always, Mr. Francois raised his hat. "Miss Zielinski."

At Union Street she got off and walked up the hill toward her store. That was not easy, because of the men standing along the sidewalk and on the street corners. Somehow they frightened her, and that was silly, since they never so much as whistled or called after her.

The store was quiet, too quiet for Easter Saturday. Felicia tied on her little apron and looked about for customers. This store was much nicer than the five-and-ten, but at least in the five-and-ten there were always people walking around who kept you from being lonesome.

The morning dragged. She sold eighteen handkerchiefs, a pair of pants, three brassieres and a cheap slip. A sad woman came to exchange a girdle for one two sizes larger. At twelve-thirty Felicia was off for lunch.

The soda jerker grinned at her. "Same thing, sweetheart?"

"Same thing, Red." He was all right, this boy. He had been in her class at high school and had helped her with solid and trig, in which he was expert. He frowned disapprovingly at her sandwich and milk shake.

"That ain't enough, sweetheart. My latest *Vogue* says the skinny figures are going out."

"There's nothing the matter with my figure, Red."

"Well, no. . . . Say, you hear about O'Mara? Had to drop out of Harvard."

"Oh!" She felt a sudden, deep sympathy. *Oh, poor kid!* "What's he doing?"

"Nothing, I guess. Say, I always thought you two made a perfect couple." Red grinned. "Assuming I couldn't have you myself. . . . Anything else, sweetheart?"

"No, Red." She spun a quarter towards him.

"Little ice cream?"

"No, thanks."

"Brownie?"

"No, Red."

"Double order of mashed potatoes?"

"No, no, Red!"

"I'm worried about you, sweetheart." She went out laughing and walked leisurely up the street. Ten minutes of her lunch hour remained. But in front of her store something was wrong. Men were surging back and forth before the show windows, crowding the sidewalk. The blue of a coat flashed in the sun. Another policeman was loping toward them across the street. *Oh! if it's a fire. . . .*

It wasn't. It wasn't even her store. The crowd, she now saw, was really at the hardware shop next to hers. They seemed to be fighting to get through the door. A little gray man came stumbling, propelled out of the mob. His face was toward her. She thought, *It's not, it can't be—he's in his office at this hour——*

"Mr. Francois!"

Mr. Francois stared. He didn't seem to know her. He limped back into the fracas.

Felicia shoved a way into her own store. Her colleagues were gazing curiously out the window. "What's up?"

The woman who sold maternity gowns said wearily, "Oh, those dopes next door. Put an ad in the afternoon paper for an odd-job man and that's what they get. God, they ought to know better."

"If they've got a job, why in hell don't they just give it to someone and shut up?" the cosmetics department asked.

No one answered her. Felicia went back to work. *Mr. Francois,* she was thinking, *Mr. Francois.*

For an hour she was busy. Then the mid-afternoon lull came, and the women gathered to talk. Felicia listened to them remotely.

"Oh, I don't know, do you think he's cuter than John Gilbert?" . . . "So then he took me to the Harvard-Yale game. Imagine, $5.50 a seat, and you had to know someone to get in." . . . "Mrs. Martin's on relief."

"Oh?"

"Yeah. She went down to City Hall and got on the list. She gets a check every Tuesday."

"Thought her boy was working."

"Just paper routes—so if you can't live on what a kid makes you can get on. I guess it's easier for a widow to get on anyhow."

"Oh."

"So then she says, 'What size you think I take, anyway?' And I said, 'Well, lady, I would *say* a forty-four.' So she got right up on her high horse and walked out." . . . "And no one, no one, is cuter than John Gilbert."

At nine she was through. She counted her cash—only nine dollars more than last Saturday—and handed it to the manager. Someone called after her, "Happy Easter." *Oh,* Felicia thought, *I'd almost forgotten, for this is not like the Easters I used to know.*

Yet on her own street, in Sikorski's, the old crowd was there. Lent was over now. Mr. Sikorski was passing around drinks, Mrs. Sikorski was trying to get everyone to eat from the basket. Someone was kidding Mr. Urban because he'd tried to give up liquor during Lent and had failed, by an hour. "At eleven I caught him turning the clock ahead," his wife said, and everyone laughed.

"Welcome to our house, Felicia." Mr. Sikorski was pouring

her a drink. With swift pride and sadness she saw the difference: she was a recognized adult now. Mother, watching her, said nothing. She took the jigger and the water.

"To you, Mr. Sikorski."

Oh, no, you didn't know that trick as a child: Hold the whisky in your mouth, raise the water glass, swallow the whisky and pour the water in after it quick.

"How about your brother Anzelm, Mr. Sikorski?"

The dark eyes smiled. "Now we only wait to get him into the quota. The promise is the same, about the passage home."

"Good—we call him Uncle Anzelm now, you know; we seem to know him so well already. And you—your wife says you go to school?"

Mr. Sikorski blushed. "Yes, I go to the night school to learn English more good."

"Fine, Mr. Sikorski!" She sat in the corner where she sat when a child, and listened silently to the talk as she had then, but now she could speak if she wished and they would listen.

"You heard about Mrs. Albecki?"

"No, what?"

"She hid her money in her mattress——"

"Yes, an old-country idea——"

"And her husband—he is not working—was smoking in bed and the mattress caught fire. Three hundred dollars, up in smoke!"

"Ah, the poor woman!"

"That proves you shouldn't smoke in bed."

"That proves you shouldn't keep money in a mattress."

Felicia closed her eyes wearily. It was all you could hear these days—people without money, people losing jobs. Sometimes she thought she'd scream if she heard any more. She thought of a line from a book she'd read: "All is gloom

around us." She thought of a song she'd liked, and hummed it, but it was merely silly.

> Look for the silver lining
> Whene'er a cloud appears in the blue——*

"Hear about Komar?"

"He has lost his spirit entirely. I saw him yesterday. All he does is sit and stare. He doesn't even look for a job any more. No use looking, Komar says."

Felicia glanced at her mother, but no expression was on Mother's face. . . . She breathed another tune in a soft treble to herself:

> I'd like to find
> My lucky star,
> Its tiny light has gone astray;
> When fate designed
> My lucky star,
> There must have been a holiday.†

"You know about Mrs. Gorczyca?"

"Ah, poor Mrs. Gorczyca——"

Someone was tapping on the door. It was Cecile St. Andre. She called, "Felicia, the telephone."

The three families in her house shared the expense of a single phone. The St. Andres were allowed to have it, since they lived on the middle floor. Felicia ran across the yard and up the stairs.

"Hello?"

The St. Andres were silent in their parlor, busy with books and sewing, pretending not to listen, and listening.

"Hello, this is Mark Standler."

"Oh, *hello*." She was breathless; she wanted to say, *Look, it's not passion, I've just been running*——

Mark said, "It's been a long time."

* Copyright 1920 by T. B. Harms Co., N. Y.
† Copyright 1928 by De Sylva, Brown and Henderson, Inc., N. Y.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm through with exams again."

"Oh, fine. How did you do?"

"All right. But I wish I had your brains—— Look, can you go to a dance a week from Friday?"

"Why, yes, Mark. Where?"

"It's the annual ball at the Whalers Club."

"Oh." Remarkable how much you could think of, swiftly, in an instant: *The other times I went up to Cambridge or Boston, I didn't have to meet his family, but now——*

Apologetically, he said, "Of course it'll be pretty dumb."

She said quite calmly, "Yes, I'd love to."

"Good. I'll drop around for you at eight-thirty or so."

"Yes." *That will be different, too.*

"Well——"

She tried to keep her voice from going soft and failed: "Don't work too hard."

"Don't you."

He had a good voice, sharp and clear, like the well-written sentences in the books she read. . . . The St. Andres looked up, pretending surprise that she'd finished. . . . She went reluctantly down the back stairs. The Easter party would seem dull now, the people as close to being stupid as old friends could ever be.

Her feet stopped on the stairs. Afterwards she remembered just how the wallpaper looked, just how the hall smelled. For she thought: *My life is dark. And the only light in it is—Mark Standler.*

I never realized that before.

She went on down, across the yard, and in Sikorski's there was singing.

"What goes on in here?"

Mr. Sikorski grinned as he hurried towards her with a little drink. "Well, we talked it over. So we decided this—this—

what do you say?—depression, won't last forever. So for tonight we have had enough of sad talk."

"I hope you're right."

"Sure." Mr. Sikorski reached for a newspaper. "All the big men say the same thing. Look here, what it says"—he read proudly, careful of each word— " 'The bottom of the business depression has been reached and in the fall we may look forward to the beginning of a more definite upward climb towards prosperity.' "

"I hope they're right."

"Sure." . . . There were more songs and more liquor, and it was past twelve when she was crossing the yard with Mother. Mother said, "How was the day?"

"All right."

"Much business?"

"No. . . . Ma?"

"Yes?"

"The women were saying you—a person could get on relief easily if she's a widow."

"So?"

"Do you think you should try?"

Mother stopped walking. "My daughter," she said, "listen. I am healthy and you are healthy. I am the best worker the mill ever had—so the foreman told me himself. Relief! A disgrace. Never, never, never in this world."

"I just wondered what you thought about it."

"Foolish girl, you know what I think!"

Felicia smiled. Her mother was looking at her angrily, but a weight was off her mind. Mother had not changed. Her spirit had not broken, as Komar's was broken. "Besides," Mother said, "we have a little reserve, the little money in the bank."

"What bank, Ma?"

"I told you once—the Standler Bank."

Felicia felt like giggling. How silly, asking Mother that just so she'd say the name.

Mother resumed walking, her lean face turned toward the sky.

"It is Easter now, Felicia."

Felicia looked up at the stars. She couldn't name it, she didn't know a thing about astronomy, but one she thought was brighter than the other stars.

"Happy Easter, Felicia."

"Happy Easter, Mother!"

She kept looking back over her shoulder at the star.

2

Even after she had her gown on she was still swiping at invisible dust in the parlor and moving furniture and telling Mother: *Don't make him take a drink. Don't wear that old apron. Don't make him look at the photographs of Pa and the twins. Don't brag about me. Don't warn me to come home early, right in front of him*——

"It's just the doorbell," Mother said; "it's not a fire alarm."

She did think Mother would be impressed by Mark. He was wearing full-dress clothes, which made him look taller and straighter than ever. "Mother, Mark Standler."

Her mother thrust out her hand. "So you go for the dance. I am glad for my daughter go for the dance."

Felicia frowned. Mother's English was usually better than that, and she had never heard her stammer before.

"Excuse me how I look," Mother said. "I go for the mill, I work for the house, at night I'm tired." At the door she said: "*Felcia, powróć wnet.*"

Felicia was a little irritated. There had been a tacit agreement that Mother would not speak Polish whenever Felicia's guests were non-Polish. The fact that the sentence meant,

"Come home early," was incidental. She said quietly, "Good night."

Mark opened the door of the car, his father's. Two of the Cieslak children were standing in the gutter admiring it, one was touching it gingerly. . . . "What did you think of Mother?"

"She must have been a pretty girl."

"Yes," Felicia said, a little surprised. "Yes, I suppose she was."

She had never been inside the Whalers Club. There was a doorman who said, "Good evening, Mr. Standler," and another took her wrap, which really belonged to Cecile St. Andre. A crowd was already in the ballroom, sitting in the heavy dark chairs or standing before the deep red drapes. Mark said, "You're prettier than ever."

"Thank you." She wondered with a sharp alarm whether he said that because he saw she was nervous. *Why should I be nervous? I'm prettier than most of these women and this gown is all right. Look at that girl, built like a match. My mother made this gown. My mother is a craftsman. I can make a dress, too, and I can cook and talk about French literature and read a book on economics and it'll be a lucky man who marries me——*

"I'd like you to meet my mother."

Why should I be nervous? And my heart is trying to jump through my ribs.

Mrs. Standler, a slender woman, was talking to a man with an imposing belly. "Mother, I want you to meet Felicia Zielinski."

"How do you do?" Mrs. Standler smiled, a completely kind and friendly smile. "I'm so glad you could come."

"And Colonel Marsden, Miss Zielinski. . . . Where's Dad?"

"Oh, you'll find him over there with his cronies." She

smiled again, at Felicia. "Are you having a good time, dear?"

"Yes, thank you." *God, just like a first-grader on parents' day in dancing school. Maybe I ought to make a little curtsy too.*

"Well, do have a good time." And Mark was taking her away and Mrs. Standler's smile was following after her. It was strange. She seemed to have seen that very same friendly, that ever-so-kind smile somewhere before. . . . Mr. Standler was talking to his cronies.

"Oh, hello, son." A tall man with wrinkles around his eyes. A brief and courteous handshake.

"How do you do? Mr. Goff, Miss Zielinski." That would be Mr. Goff of Goff Coal Company. "And Mr. Dalyrymple." Of the Dalyrymple Mills.

"How do you do?" . . . Then dancing with Mark was a pleasure in which all tension vanished. She danced with him again, three times with other men, and it was time for refreshments in the library.

That room was crowded. She and Mark found a refuge at last in the museum. Behind her were bowsprits, a ship's name plate and a ship's wheel, coiled rope, and a—what do you call those things like billy clubs?—belaying pin. And all around her, though she tried to listen to Mark, were voices:

"Grape juice, eh? We'll have something better than that afterwards. . . . found out he was living with another dame. . . . And I tell you Hoover's right, say what you like. We don't want any dole in this country . . . asked him who his bootlegger. . . . Sure, let the charities handle it. Half these people wouldn't take a job if you offered them one. Listen, I *know*. . . . Well, sure, only forty-two cents a week for food per person, but, for God's sake, most of these people have got ten kids. . . . Could get a job if they really wanted one. . . . No sirree, sir, no dole in this country. . . . Any-

thing in the grape juice?" And Mark said, "So young to be deaf."

"What?"

"I asked you what you thought of *my* folks."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Mark. I was dreaming. They're—nice."

That was true. They had been very nice to her. Later, when the dance was breaking up, they asked her to their house for a while. "Please do come—we'd really like to have you," Mrs. Standler said, and again that kind, half-remembered smile.

The house was big and old. The dark hall was narrow. Beyond the living room was another, equally large, with portraits on the wall. Mr. and Mrs. Dalyrymple came in, and another couple whose name Felicia never did get. She recognized Mr. Dalyrymple's voice as one she'd heard in the museum.

Right now he was saying, "This relief business is going to ruin people's morale if it keeps up. Why, just look at England——"

"Please," said Mrs. Standler, "let's not talk about that *now*, shall we?" She smiled kindly at Felicia. "I wonder if you'd like to see the portraits—something we always inflict on a new guest. Just look at Mark frowning at me! Bring along your drink, my dear—you'll need it."

But Felicia could sense that the portraits were to be taken seriously. One was of a weathered little man with a little beard, in a heavy frame. "That's Mark's great-grandfather Elias, the famous whaling captain. Of course, you've heard of him."

"Yes, of course." She never had. All she knew about whaling was what she'd read in *Moby Dick*. She had been aboard the *Charles Morgan* once but remembered nothing about it. She saw no point in talking about *Moby Dick*.

"They're so proud of their old family," Mrs. Standler whis-

pered. "We don't go in much for that on my side, though my mother could trace her ancestry back to Captain Godwin of the *Mayflower*. This is Mark's grandfather, Mark Standler I."

"Oh, yes."

"That's a Sargent, of course."

"Oh."

"Are any of your grandparents alive, my dear?"

"Yes, my mother's father—and my father's mother, I think. I've never seen them."

"Oh, how unusual. They don't live here, then?"

"No, in the old country."

"I beg your pardon?"

"The old country. Poland, that is."

"How very interesting."

They were back in the living room. Mr. Standler was asking everyone if they'd have another drink. "No, thank you," said Felicia. She thought Mrs. Standler look relieved.

Mr. Dalyrymple was talking about bootleggers. Brandy was poor and almost unobtainable. Prices were absurd. "Did you read what those hillbillies down South were drinking—mixture of ginger and carbolic acid? It's what they used out West as a sheep-dip, kills the vermin. Paralyzed those yokels from the waist down——"

A clock chimed gently. The couple whose name Felicia didn't know were going for their coats.

"I really must be leaving," Felicia said. *God, I talk like out of a book. I must leave ere my fine clothes turn into rags and my carriage into a pumpkin. If you find my little slipper let me know.* . . . "Thank you, I've had a lovely time."

Mrs. Standler said, "Good-by, my dear, I'm so glad you've enjoyed yourself." And there was the very kind smile again. . . . "I'll back the car around," Mark said.

It was after two when she was on her front porch again. "Well——" Mark said.

He had always kissed her, since that first time, but she had always waited for him. Now she pulled him toward her and kissed him, hard, so that at first he was almost too surprised to respond. She pushed him away, and even in her own ears her voice was strange:

"Good night."

"Good night—don't forget."

And standing there alone on the porch, remembering again his mother's smile, suddenly she thought: *That's it. Yes. That was the smile the social service ladies from the Women's Club always wore when they came to take the underprivileged kids of the playground to an outing at the beach. That was it.*

Her mother wasn't up. Mother always waited up for her, except when she was ill or angry.

Felicia took her slippers off and tip-toed into her room. For a moment she listened, but Mother was neither snoring nor getting up.

She put her slippers in her closet. She pulled her gown off and stretched her body out, face down, on the bed.

It seemed so silly to be crying, when she'd had such a lovely time.

3

The incredible fact was that Mother didn't seem to think much of Mark Standler.

Felicia was still half asleep. But she could see that though Mother asked all about the dance and the people, she was carefully not mentioning him.

"Ma? Didn't you think he was good-looking?"

"Who?"

"Mark."

"Oh." Mother cracked an egg nonchalantly. "Well, maybe. A little. If you like the skinny kind."

"Ma, he is not! Did you see his car?"

Mother looked surprised. "Car? No."

"It's an awfully nice one."

Mother shrugged. "Komar had a nice car too."

Felicia grimaced at her. Mother pretended not to notice. Felicia said, trying not to laugh. "You know, he's got a great deal of money."

"He has? And does he work?"

"You know what I mean! His folks have."

"Oh, so? So without his folks he's a vagrant."

"Ma, you're impossible!" Felicia resumed eating, and gave her up.

"Ma?"

"Yes?"

"Is this what you're trying to say: He's not good enough for me?"

"Since you ask me."

"Oh, Ma!" Felicia began to laugh. She laughed and laughed, till the tears came, and the table was vague before her.

Mother was a little angry. "Foolish girl, what is it?"

Felicia shook her head weakly, as she began to clear the table.

"There is Pete Zonak," Mother said. "Why do you not go with him?"

Felicia felt like laughing again: "Oh, Ma!"

"He was here last night after you left. A good, smart boy, with his own business."

"Oh, Ma—Pete Zonak!"

Mother said complacently, "Joan goes no longer with the Irish boy."

Felicia frowned. "Bert Sullivan? I hadn't heard——"

"She told her parents she should go with Polish boys, and now she goes only with Kuznicki."

"I don't believe it!"

Mother shrugged. "You will see. And now what if you miss your streetcar?"

Felicia frowned at the dishes. She flung her towel down. "Ma, I've got time. I'm going out a minute."

"All right," and Mother picked up the towel.

She knew it was silly. But she thought she couldn't work through the day, not knowing. . . . Joan was still in her pajamas. She nodded sleepily at Felicia.

"That's right, more or less. I am going steady with Kuznicki. Gosh, is it all over the street already?"

"But Joan—how about Bert Sullivan?"

Joan's eyebrows shrugged. "It just broke up."

"Joan—if you don't mind my asking——"

"I never mind, kid."

She could hardly get the words out, they sounded so much like an accusation. "Did the fact that Bert isn't Polish—have something to do with it?"

Joan shrugged, and glanced at the open door to her bedroom.

"Joan, did it?"

Joan's voice was low. "I got so darned tired of arguing with them, and seeing them trying to be nice to Bert and not quite making it, and crabbing, crabbing, all the time—oh, Felicia, it wasn't any use."

Felicia stared at her. "But didn't you *like* him?"

"Sure. So what? Do you think I'd still like him, or he'd like me, after a few more months of that? Fighting the whole family, the whole street, the whole gang of them? So I called it off—while the calling was good. And now they let me alone."

"I'm sorry. And it wasn't any of my business really."

"Sure it was, kid. I—maybe you think I let you down."

"No." She could almost feel the streetcar bouncing, and Joan's hand tightening on hers. "We did have a promise, sort of."

"Sure. You say a lot of funny things when you're young, don't you?"

"Yes," Felicia said, "don't you."

She walked back up the street. *Oh, God,* she thought, looking at her shoes, *please let me grow up some day. Please don't let me think these silly little affairs amount to something.*

Or maybe this one does, because maybe it means I'm alone. I shouldn't want to be alone.

Her mother said, "Was it so?"

"What?"

"Oh, come," Mother said, "I know you went to Urbans'."

All right." Felicia picked up the dish towel, though the dishes were put away. "Yes, it was true."

"So what does it mean to you?"

"It means nothing to me."

"You are a stubborn, stubborn girl."

Felicia said nothing.

"All your life you said, 'Joan Urban does this,' 'Joan Urban does that,' so you must do it. Now you say what?"

"I say—nothing."

Her mother raised her hands to heaven. "What have I done to deserve such a stubborn girl?"

"If I am stubborn," Felicia said, "I get it from you."

"From me?"

Felicia folded the towel carefully. "I remember Father whispering, when I was a little girl, 'Don't go against your mother—her mind is so strong.' Father always gave in to you, because his will wasn't as strong as yours. But I'm like you."

"Don't you talk against your father!"

"Ma: Why didn't you go on relief?"

"That has nothing——"

"Why, Ma?"

"Because it wasn't right!"

Felicia smiled. "But I think you were only being stubborn——"

Mother jumped up, began hunting furiously for the mop. She would take out her annoyance, now, on the spotless floors.

"Stubborn girl, if you don't go for the streetcar, we *will* be on relief. . . ."

That was an endless morning. Even the unemployed seemed to have saved their shopping for Saturday. By eleven o'clock Felicia was nearly asleep standing up.

By two, after lunch, she felt better. By six she had the reserve strength that always seemed to come to her need. By nine, out on the sidewalk again, she was sorry the day was over.

The streetcar was almost up to her. She wondered who the well-dressed young man was, running across the street.

"Felicia!"

"Hello? Oh, Steve O'Mara."

He stood before her, expectant, grinning, as he'd done in high school and on the playground—as though waiting for her to say, "Where have you been?"

She said, "Where—what have you been doing?"

"Look." He took her arm eagerly. "Why don't you take a little ride out to Sagamore with me and I'll tell you."

"No, thanks."

"Oh, please." He looked hurt. "It's lousy, going alone."

"Well——" *My God, either go or don't. Either you're sorry for him or you're not. Don't hold a conference with yourself on the sidewalk.*

"We'll just have a drink and start back when you say."

She thought of her mother, waiting with new and accumu-

lated arguments. She thought of Joan and Bert Sullivan, and she wouldn't want anyone to think . . . She nodded.

"All right," she said.

4

The Buick raced over the perfect road. Felicia leaned back. O'Mara was driving very fast but tonight, surprisingly, she didn't care. In the middle of the square at Mattapoisett a policeman waved at them, and O'Mara waved gaily back. They raced beyond Mattapoisett into the blackness again, and the friendly smells of the sea.

She'd been curious, and now she thought it not too soon to ask: "Is this your car?"

"No—Frank Madeira's. The lawyer. I work for him."

"Are you studying law?"

"In a way. Mostly I do odd jobs—sort of a glorified errand boy."

"It's a job, anyhow."

"That's the slogan. . . . Look—the Canal."

"Oh, how soon." It was like a black broad highway, with street lights along the sides.

O'Mara drove across the bridge at Sagamore, made two left turns, swung around a sand dune, and stopped behind a dark house.

"Why in back?"

"If the cops raid it, we could get away in the rush without getting a fender banged."

There was no light on the porch. A man thrust his head through the doorway. "Yeah? Oh, hello, Steve."

Everyone was very friendly. The place itself was like all the others she'd been in—low ceilings, smoke, cheap tablecloths, waiters who didn't look like waiters.

"They seem to know you—do you come here every night?"

O'Mara laughed. "I'm afraid I couldn't afford that." A waiter who looked like a professional wrestler said, "What'll it be, Steve?" and O'Mara looked at her.

I don't know. He hasn't much money, and I hate gin. Make it as painless as possible. "A Tom Collins, please."

"Scotch and soda," said O'Mara.

Felicia looked around the room. *How absurd, coming all this way for a drink, and yet it's amusing too. I feel so relaxed, whereas last night——*

She said, "Do you ever see any of the gang from high school?"

"Not often. Some have had tough luck."

"Yes." And that was something she and Mark never talked much about—high school, the old days. Perhaps because Mark had so many new things, now, to interest him——

"I couldn't hang on at Harvard myself, when my father lost his job."

"Yes, I know." *Some of us live a little in the past,* she thought, watching a blonde girl who was very drunk, *because in the past we did things we liked and will never do again. Like school——*

"So O'Mara wound up right behind the eight ball. And so, I might add, did Zielinski."

She smiled, shaking her head. "I'm not weeping."

"Here's to that. . . . Are—is your mother working?"

"No. Not yet."

"Let's get it over with," O'Mara said. "Your mother isn't working and my father isn't and my mother's going to have another kid. Four kids, and now they're going to have another one, because you don't need a job to have a kid. Here's to America, where poverty will be abolished."

It struck them funny. It was absurd, it was criminal to laugh at such things, but they laughed till the blonde girl turned and stared, and the pugnacious waiter smiled.

O'Mara said, "That's the spirit. . . . Look," he said in a

moment, "I want to see someone——" She saw him going into the kitchen, where the proprietor—or bouncer, or whatever he was—had gone.

I must be crazy, to be with him in such a place. I am not this kind of person. But neither am I last night's kind of person. I am neither, and I wish——

O'Mara came back. "Another drink?"

"No, thanks." She wondered—a habit she'd acquired from Mother—how much the bill was, but she never did see him pay it. Maybe he had an account, or maybe that was what he saw the man about.

They drove back to the bridge. This time, state troopers were halting every car. One shone a flashlight into her face and O'Mara's, swept it over the back seat, snapped it off. "All right, kids, go ahead."

O'Mara stamped on the clutch. "Kids! Those flatfeet have a nerve."

"Looking for rum-runners?"

"I suppose so."

Felicia laughed. "After all we've been through—according to us—he dares to call us kids."

"The class of 1929," O'Mara said solemnly, "will never be kids again."

He began whistling *Jericho, Jericho*, as he swung toward home and pressed the accelerator down. He whistled it almost all the way to Wareham—a song the bands had played quite often, that spring of '29. . . . Felicia rolled the window down, and closed her eyes and let the salt wind blow through her hair.

She was tired enough to be sleepy, and pleasantly relaxed. By the time they reached her house, she felt almost drunk, though not from alcohol.

"Good night, and thank you."

"Felicia—don't hurry."

She had known that he would try to kiss her and that she would let him. He kissed her fiercely, as though he'd been waiting all his life. First, it was distasteful, then merely endurable. Then she was kissing him back, and a clear corner of her brain was crying, *Why?* His hand went up to her breast. She had half expected that too and the clear corner of her mind said, *Look, this time I'm not angry and I'll never be young like that again. . . .* She pushed his hand away.

"Good night. No, don't bother to walk up with me." She would need to straighten out her dress, before she went in to Mother.

She walked almost giddily toward the kitchen door. *Last night I was fighting everything and tonight I'm drunk. . . . I should feel like a whore. I let him kiss me harder than Mark and there was pleasure when he touched me. I should feel like a whore and I don't.*

She looked up at the sky. *Hello, little star. Don't keep me waiting forever.*

She went in to the lights and to Mother. Mother said diplomatically, "How red your cheeks are."

"Thank you."

"You are late."

"Yes, I was out."

"With——?"

"Kazimierz Mierzykowski."

"Oh," Mother said. "Good."

Felicia said in English, "Any resemblance to any actual person, living or dead, is purely coincidental."

"*What?*"

"It's just a lot of English, Mother. It doesn't mean anything. It never does."

"I understand," said Mother.

ALEC · SUMMER

I

THE NIGHT HE MET Felicia Zielinski, a warm orange haze was across the moon and spring at last was clearly on its way. *Perhaps an occupational disease,* he was thinking, *for a teacher to be restless in May.*

Ted Brewster had said, "There's a decent speak on Boylston Street, if you want to go."

"O. K."

"Of course, if you'd rather take a woman——"

Alec shook his head.

"You're kind of funny about women," Brewster said. "You don't pay much attention to them, or not for very long."

Alec glanced at him. "I'm perfectly normal, if that's what you mean. No perversions——"

"Oh, no doubt. I merely wondered."

"Stop wondering, and let's get the subway. You family men can never understand what freedom means."

"It's all right," Brewster said. "Don't tell me about yourself till you want to."

It was in Copley Square, near the library, that they ran into Mark Standler and the girl. "Mr. Marwick, Miss Zielinski. Mr. Brewster." . . . Alec liked her at once—the clear eyes, the friendly mouth.

"Frankly," Brewster said, "we're embarrassed. Professional

ethics, pupil-teacher relationships—— We were going to a speakeasy."

Mark laughed. "If you mean the one around the corner, we were too. So it'll be all right to ask us along."

"This is what they've done to us," Brewster said, "made dirty speakeasies the meeting place of youth—— Hurry up, or we won't get in."

But the speakeasy was still comparatively empty. Alec looked across the table at Felicia. "Home-town girl?"

She smiled, nodding.

"I know all about it—Johnnycake Hill, County Street, Whaling Museum——"

"You bet," Ted Brewster said. "This here's Mr. Marwick, local historian."

"Seamen's Bethel——"

Felicia looked disappointed. Quietly, she asked, "Do you know anything about my people?"

"Yes." *Not much pretense in this girl,* Alec thought. *Most people would be quick to wrap those old traditions around them.* "I know about the immigrants, if that's what you mean. I know they made your city what it is—with their hands, their underpaid sweat." He glanced at Mark, but nothing he was saying seemed new or startling to Mark. "You remember what Ishmael said in *Moby Dick.* 'Had it not been for us whalemen, that tract of land would this day be in as howling condition as the coast of Labrador.' Now the immigrants can say the same, but they get no thanks for it."

Felicia looked at him steadily. "I think there is very little prejudice against them any more. Oh, perhaps a few people—— You seem to mind it more than I do."

"Would you say there is no prejudice, no discrimination?"

"Almost none."

"Almost?"

"Mr. Marwick," Ted Brewster said, "psychologist, psy-

choanalyst, sociologist, and part-time guidebook, will now analyze the word 'almost.' Who says another drink? . . . No? Come on, Standler, we'll get one at the bar."

Felicia smiled at him. "Where are you from, Mr. Marwick?"

"Nebraska. Before that, Nevada."

"You're not married?"

"No. Does that mean my life is wasted?"

"Oh, of course not."

"I have been known to go out with girls, though."

She didn't smile. "Tell me about them."

Alec shook his head. "Though there was one——" He looked at Felicia through the smoke, hearing nothing in the speakeasy but his own voice, seeing nothing but her quiet face. "You remind me of her somehow, though she didn't look like you."

"Oh."

"She was no older than you are now."

"I'd like you to tell me about her some time."

"Yes." Alec stared at Mark Standler, leaning beside Ted Brewster at the bar. *You close-cropped, skinny-shanked young squirt,* Alec thought, *I wonder if you even guess how lucky you are.* "Yes," he said, "I will some day."

2

The girl in Nevada wore pigtails in September but by May a graceful bob. Alec thought vaguely of the Old Testament when he saw her skin and the blackness of her hair. Her name was Rachel Lazarus. Her father owned a clothing store on South Virginia Street.

He had worried all summer about teaching in a coed university, but he stopped worrying when he saw the coeds. Most of them were not disturbing. A few tried hard to be,

a noted few were pretty, all were not much more than names on an attendance slip. Rachel sat in a back row of English 3C and it was weeks before he even knew she was there.

One day she passed in a composition on the beauty at sunset of the mountains between Reno and Virginia City. Alec was skeptical at first—he had seen so many such attempts dissolve into effusions of purple prose. But this one had at least a measure of sincerity.

> . . . I have been fortunate enough to have seen the wild colors of Wind River Canyon—blue in the sky, red in the rocks, yellow in the sand, emerald in the grass, blue-green in the swift clean river; the monstrous beauty of Grand Canyon; Lake Tahoe hugged by the Sierras; the reds and yellows of the Painted Desert; the commercialized wonders of Yellowstone, a Coney Island set down in the wilderness. But I shall remember none of them as I remember these foothills in the twilight. Is that because they mean more to me, and their beauty is, therefore, a personal prejudice? Yes. What is beauty, after all, but a thing in the mind? . . .

Largely from habit he quizzed her about it in his story conference. Three other students were present also. He saw her color rising as he read her words. A little sorry he had started the whole thing: "Miss Lazarus, are they really as beautiful as that?"

She seemed to grow an inch taller, lifting her head. "Have you ever seen them, sir?"

"No—not like that, at that hour."

"Then I wish you would go and look, Mr. Marwick. If I could only show you them——"

She stopped, confused, and looked at the floor as her cheeks flamed. Alec said quickly, "It's a good essay for that very reason—one does believe in it. But here you say, 'I have been fortunate enough to have seen the wild colors,' etc.

Why not say, 'I have seen the wild colors,' since it's obvious from what follows that you were fortunate——"

She looked at him steadily. "Yes, Mr. Marwick."

He would not have believed that he could ever carry on a courtship in his classroom. But surely he noticed her thereafter—her very quietness, something deep and waiting in her eyes—a quality he could not name. It was like trying to describe the beauty of mountains, it came out hammy in the end. Still the mountains were there. . . . He said at last what she had said: *Perhaps it is something merely in my mind, but it makes her different to me.*

He formed the habit of looking at her whenever he said a witty thing. She was always listening, always smiled; their eyes met. It was a means of communication, the only one they had. She never stayed to talk after class as many did. But always, going out, she glanced at him and their eyes said good-by.

It satisfied him a long time, that kind of thing. He wondered about her sometimes outside of class—where she was, what she was doing. He had a desire, most unorthodox, to kiss the top of her hair when she was bent over, writing, in class. He knew that young instructors were always under scrutiny—that so much as a noticed smile between them might start a vicious slander. He stopped worrying about that after a while.

It was in April, on South Virginia Street, that all this ended. He had walked from Ramos' drugstore across the river to Riverside Hotel and back, twice, before he was willing to admit just why he was doing it: because he passed her father's store on the way; because of a half-formed, childish hope that he might run into her. . . . *Suppose you did? What would you say?*

He knew at once what he wanted to say, the next time he saw her in class. She was wearing a print dress that made her

look cooler than anyone else as the arid sunlight struck across the room and no breeze came. Their eyes met. *Speak now,* his mind said. *Maybe you've been dreaming, maybe you're a fool. Find out—now.*

He always remembered, afterwards, the topic of his lecture that day. *Future Possibilities of the Proletarian Novel in America.*

The class got out in a hurry, a sort of left-handed tribute to the lecture, and Rachel was almost last. She glanced at him; instantly, before she could smile and look away, he said: "Miss Lazarus."

She came quietly towards his desk. "Yes, Mr. Marwick."

"How're the mountains?"

"Oh—fine."

He looked at her a moment. She must have known what he was up to, for her eyes seemed to go soft as she waited.

Alec said, "You were going to show them to me some day."

"I should like to."

Her eyes were still on him, waiting. He said, as casually as he could, "How about Sunday? I think my old car can make it——"

She was one whose emotions all came out on her face—quiet happiness, quiet pride. She hugged her books up under her arm. "I live at 372 Plantation Avenue," she said. . . .

It was an old house, once pretentious, with grass and trees. Alec rang the bell. It was difficult to believe this little bent man in a skull cap could be her father. Rachel came down at once and kissed her father, who murmured, "My child's mother is dead."

"Daddy, daddy, no one is interested in the family Lazarus." To Alec she said earnestly, "We'd better hurry, Mr. Marwick."

She sat straight on the seat beside him, hugging her field

glasses, smiling a little at familiar places along the road. Alec thought: *We'll look at her mountains, I suppose, and come home again. Perhaps some other day we can go and go beyond, to Carson City, maybe, or even Tahoe. Maybe, I don't know.* . . . Only once more on the way to the foothills did she call him Mr. Marwick.

They parked off the road with the sun behind them and watched the twilight, watched the golds turn to crimson and the reds to mauve, the incredible colors of the Sierras. Alec asked, "What did I give you on that essay?"

"B plus. I remember very well."

"Should have been A. A minus, anyhow. No one could describe this."

The sun was going, her face was nearly invisible now, but he knew she was smiling. "I told you so, Mr. Marwick."

Then the sun went and darkness came so quickly that it seemed just a bit abrupt to suggest going home. After all, he had taken up her evening—an evening with many stars——

He said, "Let's drive down to Virginia City."

"Yes."

Passing the ghostly remains of the town, she said, "But I didn't write about Virginia City."

Alec shook his head. "That won't be necessary any more." *No, that had served its purpose. Exactly what would take its place he didn't know, or whether anything would.* . . . It seemed rather pointless to turn and go back the same way, so he continued past the old mines into Carson City, swung around the tiny Capitol, said: "We can go home the other way, Route 395."

"That will be nice."

"Do you always agree so readily?"

"Always," she said. "All my life."

It was on 395, a comparatively safe road, that the accident happened. Alec had observed the red tail-light traveling

around the curves ahead, traveling much too fast. There was a desperate shrill squeal of brakes, a terrible crash, and Rachel's hands flew up. "Alec!"

The car was out of sight in a gully. Two others, south-bound, had already stopped. Doors slammed in the quiet darkness. Alec and Rachel slid down the bank towards the car. He reached for her hand. They were taking someone from the wreck—a man, moaning softly.

Alec felt the pressure of Rachel's hand increase. They were taking a woman out now, and the way her head hung——

Alec said sharply, "You'd better go back——"

He hurried forward, helped someone lift the injured man. One of the south-bound persons muttered, "Put them in my car—take them in to Carson. This lucky hound's still kicking——" Afterwards, he found Rachel waiting for him in his own car.

She was trembling quietly. "She was dead, Alec."

"I know."

"I tried to open her dress, help her, but it wasn't any use. Her neck——"

"Try not to remember it." He put his arm around her shoulders; felt her stiffen. She turned a little toward him and her trembling stopped.

"We'll get out of here." He took his arm away, put the car into first, put it into second, into third; drove perhaps fifty yards. He drew over on the road shoulder and stopped. Deliberately, he put his arm around her again, brought her toward him.

She looked up at him soberly. "Is this because of the accident?"

"No. This is what I've wanted to do."

"I'm glad," she said.

He had greatly wanted to kiss her, too, he realized, feeling

her lips soft against his and the warmth of her face. He touched her face, her hair; saw in the starlight her eyes were touched with tears.

She said softly, "Did it take an accident—a death——"

"No. No. It must have happened, sooner or later."

"Yes."

"All these months——" He grinned. "I never really was interested in those damned mountains."

"Oh, I always knew you weren't!"

"It'll seem rather funny, with you in class——"

She looked at him in surprise. "Does that matter?"

"No"—he couldn't keep his voice from admitting he hadn't known it didn't—"no, of course it doesn't."

On her porch she said, "Good night, Mr. Marwick."

He said solemnly, "Good night, Miss Lazarus," and kissed her hard.

After that they made little expeditions to the places he had thought of—Lake Tahoe, El Dorado—spent a day at Pyramid Lake, and even a week-end in San Francisco, where Rachel slept with an aunt and after which both were late for Monday class. Class was no different—except there was more to smile about now, more meaning in the smiles. And the year was going—four weeks to Commencement, three weeks, two. And there was the letter.

The letter had come the day after he was back from San Francisco. He hadn't bothered to tell her about it the day they rode the horseback trails on Mount Rose or the night they danced at Fallen Leaf. He must tell her about it now, today, with the sweet smell of June in the air and a year dying——

She came down running, as usual, and he kissed her in front of her father. Her father was feeling ill lately—spoke often of going away—constantly read his Talmud. . . . This was going to be a good long day. So he saw no need to tell

her while they were swimming in Tahoe, or eating their picnic lunch high over Emerald Bay. *Tell her before twilight,* he thought, *before these woods are cold and her face is dark. I need to see her face.*

He remembered afterwards just how she looked—white jersey over blue bathing suit and her legs thrust out; mountain flowers were in her hair. She was wiggling her toes when he said, "I've had a letter from Nebraska."

"Oh?"

"From Lincoln. The university. They want me to take a job."

"Oh." The toes stopped wiggling.

"Assistant professor."

She glanced at him quickly. "I see." Slowly, thoughtfully, the toes resumed.

He said, "What is it you have—another year here?"

"Yes." Watching the toes.

"Not much more money in Nebraska, but I suppose——"

All her mind was in her eyes—pride, admiration, surprise: "But of course you'll take it!"

God, all these weeks and I'm still her hero. He could see the choice, as clearly as he saw the pines bending before the sudden wind or the lake wrinkling. *Tell her to come away, get married, and to hell with college. Or to hell with Nebraska and the job——*

He didn't know which to say. He said neither. She reached out her hand and pressed his, and the moment, the need to decide, was gone.

Her eyes widened. "Look, it's snowing!" They walked down the mountain with the flakes melting in their hair.

The next time, she said, "Dad thinks we should go to California this summer—thinks it may help his health, though this is the healthiest place on earth."

"With the prettiest mountains?"

She shook her head, smiling as though at something out of a far, remembered past. "What will you do?"

"This summer? Go back to Wisconsin for a while. Afterwards——"

He could see clearly what he might do afterwards, without knowing just what to do. "Maybe I'll know more about it, maybe by Commencement——"

They sat on a campus bench Commencement Day. Shadows were long on the little lake of which the university was so proud. The happy graduates, the proud parents were almost all departed. Rachel said abruptly, "I hope my father will be here a year from now."

"Of course he will."

She said, "We're leaving tomorrow."

"So soon? I didn't——"

"Yes." She looked at him steadily. "This has been a beautiful year."

"Don't talk as though it's over."

"I always wanted you to kiss me on the campus," she said. "A childish little thing, but—— Kiss me, please."

But by the time they said good night nothing was decided. Even while he was kissing her his mind was labeling it all: *Bad for them to be apart. Foolish for him not to go to Nebraska. Mad for her to leave Nevada. Unwise. . . . not sensible . . . unfortunate. . . . There isn't any hurry*, his mind cried, and sounded like a liar.

On her porch she said, "Good-by."

He held her face in his hands. "Remember you're to write. And I'll be seeing you soon."

"Yes. Yes, of course." She kissed him passionately, but at the end somehow there was something dubious, or something sad, in her kiss—— He couldn't see her face. He said, "Au revoir, Miss Lazarus."

"Good-by, Mr. Marwick."

Inexplicably he felt lousy, driving away. He went into a joint on East Second Street and bought a drink. *Jesus Christ,* he thought, *you're a big boy now, out of high school, out of college, right out in the world. You shouldn't be crying into your beer. You ought to know how all this will end. It will be all right.*

3

It was never all right. They wrote to each other during summer and fall, but her letters left him curiously disturbed and unsatisfied. They were stiff, as though she couldn't forget he'd been her composition teacher; dull, as though she saw no sense in making love by mail. . . . Everything in Reno was the same. Her father, no better and no worse. She never mentioned going out with anyone else, never spoke of their future together or apart.

He went back at Christmas. Her father was seriously ill. She was as lovable as ever, but remote, distant, he assumed because of her father. He said good-by to her at the railroad station. She wound her arms about him. It seemed less than ever a time for decision, with her father dying half a mile away. . . . Her body stretched up from her tiptoes to her hands, waving good-by. All the way across the Humboldt basin he was uneasy, troubled, wondering whether he shouldn't have stayed. If her father was going to die, her whole life change, he should be with her. . . . He was scheduled to be in Nebraska in the morning.

He thought of her often, in Nebraska. There were girls in class and women in the city, but he thought them like the land—plain, open, monotonous as death. Rachel wrote him precisely as often as he wrote to her: *Daddy is better now. I went skiing near Tahoe, where we were. English is dull for me this year. There are flowers in the mountains now. Do*

you remember Sue Ballard? Reno is quite warm. I am thinking of Commencement. . . .

He managed to get back to her three days after Commencement. Unreasonably he was surprised to see her looking older, thought her perhaps a trifle stout. They sat in her father's parlor and talked, but with six months behind them there seemed less than ever to talk about. . . . He was glad suddenly he had not been impulsive a year ago, had not rushed them into a marriage they might regret. He tried to kiss her; she looked at him in honest surprise; he felt like a fool.

He went away in a week. He wrote to her in July, August, October, sent her a little card and a gift at Christmas. Always in her letters she seemed to be waiting, passive. If he mentioned seeing her again, she mentioned it; if he were affectionate, she was tender: not otherwise. He was utterly relieved that this was so.

In April he got the letter from Harvard. They wanted him to come in September. He wrote to Rachel about it, received an earnest note of congratulation. In June he went back to Wisconsin, where he studied in the morning and worked a farm in the afternoon. In September, just before leaving for Cambridge, he wrote: "Of course, I shall see you again." He knew he never would.

They did not write to each other after that.

He thought of her, sometimes, in Cambridge—when he saw the straight wide shoulders of a girl with black hair, when some woman's phony emotions reminded him of her own deep simplicity. But the aching wonder whether he had been fair to her, or wise even according to his own lights, dulled. The sharp memory of her face slowly faded.

The night he met Felicia Zielinski, he caught a glimpse of her again.

4

Ted Brewster said, as they walked back through Copley Square, "Nice kid."

"Who?"

"The girl, of course. You took quite a shine to her."

Alec said, "I like the young and clean of heart."

"You're a fake," Brewster said. They walked a while in silence, as though there was no argument about that.

"Is that the lad you were talking to last year?"

"Yes."

"Think he'll marry the girl?"

"I doubt it," Alec Marwick said. "I doubt it very, very much."

5

When he returned from summer school at Middlebury he found a letter from Caroline Standler, suggesting that he come down over Labor Day. When he came back from a week on the Cape he found another insisting that he come—she'd planned this a long time, it would be just like two years ago, except that Mark would be there and some others—— She'd not take no for an answer.

Caroline met him at the station. "I'm so glad you came. It's hard planning a thing like this when people won't co-operate."

"Who won't co-operate?"

"Not you, darling. Jill. I asked her to come and she can't —going to Saratoga Springs or some such place."

"I see." *You bet I see. Taking the cure, no doubt, the aftermath of too much bathtub gin.*

"You remember Jill."

"Sure." *Vaguely, a flapper, an anachronism, a relic out of*

a dying era. I'm no Don Juan, but a lot of women I remember only vaguely. Others——

"And I asked the Brimmers—but they can't come either. . . . What's the matter, Alec, you look a bit alarmed."

"Nothing at all."

"If it's my driving, don't worry—all these intersections and I've never hit anyone yet. But Faith is coming."

"Oh." She was peering down County Street, she didn't see his face this time.

"That's why I'm so worried about Mark." They were at the house now. "I wrote him that he must be home for Labor Day but he said he couldn't. He's like you, you see. Then I sent him a wire."

"If he's like me, he'll come."

"I do hope so—I shouldn't want the party to be a flop for poor Faith. Sit down, Alec, you look tired. . . . Have you seen him lately?"

"I saw him in May."

"Was he with anyone?"

"Sure. Ted Brewster and me."

"I mean, was anyone with him?"

"Yes. A girl."

Caroline said slowly, "Who was it? Was it——"

"A girl from here, I believe. Zielinski. Felicia Zielinski."

"I see." Caroline sat down slowly, stared at him thoughtfully. "It's still going on, then."

Alec said, "I don't quite——" There was a noise at the door and John coming in.

John said the occasion called for a drink. Pouring it, he asked, "What do they think up at Harvard—the business outlook and so on?"

"I guess they're like everyone else—don't know what to think."

"Lot of radical talk, I imagine."

"Well, some say the business leaders who made us prosperous should be trusted now. Others say if it's the business leaders who have got us into this mess, they've had enough of them."

John nodded. "Of course, it gives a lot of people a chance to make wisecracks. Especially in Congress. A bunch of smart Alecks. Sniping, opposition, destructive criticism, demagoguery—— Proves what I've always said, the safe and sane element in our government is the Presidency."

"Did you hear about John?" Caroline asked. "They want him to run for lieutenant governor next year."

"Seems to me I read about that," Alec said, and wondered whether he could have.

"It was never in the papers, Alec."

"Oh."

John said, "Well, Colonel Marsden and Joe Cassidy and some others thought someone from down here would strengthen the ticket, that's all. And God knows it's about time they gave me a little recognition, after all the years I've kicked in to the campaign fund——"

"It's so wonderful, Alec—imagine going back to Boston—going home, for me. All those wonderful shops, and symphony, and Beacon Hill——"

"Of course, it's a long way off, a lot can happen. And if the bank, business conditions, get much more troublesome—it's all off anyhow. I wouldn't have time."

"I always wondered," Alec said, "if it's not too personal—how people like you made out in that stock market thing."

"Of course it's not too personal, Alec! You lost, didn't you, dear?"

"Oh, sure. Some."

"And all that business about margin stocks——"

"Well, I kept most of that covered. Gained some back since."

"John," Caroline said, "I never knew that. You don't mean you've bought more stocks!"

"Why, sure." John laughed, as though at a child. "Suppose I buy a share at 200 and it goes down to 100. I've lost a hundred dollars, haven't I? Later I buy another share at the bottom price and sell it when it struggles up to 125. Then I've only lost seventy-five."

"I understood it fairly well," Caroline said, "until you started using figures. Making money seems to be nothing but juggling figures around, and I never was much good at figures." She said earnestly, "There was the best editorial in the paper this morning. Said the depression really needn't last forever. It would be over just as soon as everyone—every government, business, household—put its finances in order and made itself—what is the word?"

"Solvent."

"—made itself solvent by balancing income against outgo. Don't you think that was sound?"

"It's all right with me," John said. "You can start cutting expenses any time you want, right here."

"Discussing such things in front of Alec! But isn't it awful, Alec? So many people have had to make economies. The yacht would have to go first, I suppose, with us."

"It's made some changes, all right."

"Where could we start, John?"

"That's up to you."

"Well, there's my fall coat. I could have that made over"—she lowered her voice, because Evalyn had come quietly into the room to pick up the glasses—"instead of buying a new one. It would cost forty dollars for the job. Subtract that from the price of a new one and you'd have the total savings."

John said, "I didn't know you were thinking of buying a new one."

"Then that's not such a good idea." Her gaze was following Evalyn. She said suddenly, "John, never Evalyn."

"No—I suppose not."

"I remember how Mother always said that one had a certain moral responsibility toward a servant who'd been with one a long time. You never knew Mother, Alec."

"No."

"Mother had an Irish cook first, then afterwards a Swede, and always treated them so kindly. No, Mother was right. Discharging Evalyn would not in any case be the thing to do."

"I suppose not."

"She was always so broad-minded with the foreign-born servants. It was the way she brought us up. Even when my brother Ralph got mixed up with some Irish girl down in New Jersey—Ralph went to Rutgers, Alec, but only because he couldn't quite get into Harvard—Mother wasn't upset at all. Not she."

John said, "Someone at the door."

"Oh," Caroline said, "I do hope it's Mark. I've had enough disappointments, what with Jill and those old Brimmers——"

She came back opening the yellow envelope.

" 'Sorry cannot make it. Promised month ago to spend week-end in Bar Harbor. Home Tuesday. Love. Mark.' "

She threw the telegram vexedly on the table. "Whatever can we do now? That poor girl——"

"Look here," John grinned, "you're a little insulting. Alec and I aren't old men yet, you know."

Caroline smiled. "You will be nice to her, won't you, Alec? Try to make her forget how much she misses Mark. I know you can do it."

"Sure," Alec said. "I'll try."

Caroline frowned darkly. "But I do think it's ungrateful of Mark—the one time I wanted him home. I'll bet that girl is behind it all somehow."

John said, "What girl?"

"That Polish girl. Zibilski, or Zielowski, or whatever her name——"

"Oh, don't be too hard on the boy. He can't be home all the time. And there's Evalyn, waiting to tell us dinner's ready."

But after dinner, when the talk had drifted off to a score of other subjects, Caroline said suddenly: "Alec, don't you think a year in Europe would do Mark a lot of good?"

John lowered his pipe and stared at her. "Are you crazy?"

"Why, no. I think a trip abroad would be much better for him than a year in college, don't you? And he could start again when he came home."

"That's absurd."

"My brother Ralph went abroad when he was in college. It did him a world of good."

"Maybe." John spoke very slowly. "But I thought you said we can't afford things like that right now?"

"Oh."

"Isn't that what we were talking about before dinner?"

"I'm afraid I forgot."

John looked wryly at Alec, and Caroline said, "I haven't done very well so far, have I?" . . . Later she said, "Alec, wouldn't you rather have Mark's room than the guest room? It faces the harbor side and it's so much cooler."

"Sure." It was a good room—the walls a little cluttered with youthful souvenirs—the piece of bowsprit of the *Jenny Clinton,* an old .22, a javelin, a little pearl-handled revolver. Best of all was the sea, and Alec fancied he could hear thunder rolling and a storm. But when he turned off the lights and looked out, the sky was clear and starry. Tomorrow would be a bright, warm day, perfect for an outing.

No luck, he was thinking, *no luck at all.*

6

Faith was coming in on the early train. Caroline said it'd be jolly if John and Alec went to meet her.

Alec thought of the times he'd seen her since that night he took her to pops, over a year ago. Once in a restaurant, once in a speakeasy near Scolly Square, once at Class Day in the stadium—that time, left alone with him, she'd stood close and looked up with a mocking, daring smile——

Now as she stepped down from the train her eyes lit up with brief surprise and there was that scornful smile again.

John said, "Of course you know Alec."

"Yes, of course."

At the house, Caroline said, "You told her about Mark?"

"Why," John said, "we forgot."

"If that isn't just like a man! . . . I'm sorry, dear, Mark wasn't able to come."

"That's too bad."

"You're not angry?"

"Why, surely not. I'm just sorry for you."

Caroline said to Alec, "Isn't she the sweetest girl, not to be cross? After I told her Mark would be here——"

"Yes, she is."

Faith looked at him quickly. Caroline didn't seem to notice the amused, mocking smile. She said, "But Alec can take his place all right. Don't you think so, John?"

Faith smiled quietly as though at a polite joke and Alec said, carefully examining the sky: "Looks like a clear day all right, perhaps a little windy. . . ."

The sea was rough, even within the harbor. "Sit down, or lie down," John said. "Don't go walking around, as soon as we're past the fort." Caroline insisted on staying with him at the wheel. Alec sat beside Faith on the foreward deck of the *Jenny Clinton III.*

She said, hugging her knees, "Are you all right?"

"Sure."

"I didn't see you at pops this year."

"I didn't go this year."

"Are you afraid of pops, pop?"

"No," Alec said. "I'm not afraid."

"You're sure you're all right?" she insisted. "You're sure your health is normal?"

"Yes."

She stretched her long legs out. "How are the little Harvard boys?"

"All right, I suppose." He said, thinking of Mark, "I take it you have a wide acquaintance."

"I find them rather immature." She was kneeling now, as the *Jenny Clinton* leaped into the swells. "Please unbutton my dress."

"What?"

"My dress, please. There are two buttons on either shoulder."

He couldn't resist glancing towards the stern. Caroline gaily waved at him. *Oh, my God!* His fingers fumbled. Faith caught the front straps in her hands and lay down on the deck, exposing her back to the sun. Her smile laughed at him.

"Thank you."

In Nantucket the late afternoon was still warm and it was a shame, Caroline said, not to go swimming at once. Alec felt more like sleeping on the sand. But with Faith racing up and down and swimming away out—*God,* he thought, *I feel old enough to be her father and I wish I were. I'd spank her lean and tender bottom.*

He swam far beyond what he thought was her limit, tried to float, was a little startled to hear her voice.

"Hello!"

"Hello."

She was treading water beside him. "Help me, it's pretty darned hard——"

She seemed to be carrying something in one hand, the other she placed on his shoulder. It wasn't easy for him, either, with his hands slippery on her thin waist and his feet kicking and the sea jumping into his mouth. She let the sea push her softly against him, and smiled.

"See if you can beat me back."

It wasn't hard to do. The curious sidestroke she was using didn't help her speed. He made the beach in time to drop down beside John and Caroline and watch her come in. Ten yards out, she stopped and waved—yes, something in her hand. Her bathing suit. . . . Caroline said, "What was that?"

"Piece of seaweed. Been lugging it around. That's why I beat her in."

"She's such a sweet girl," said Caroline.

After dinner, dancing, she said, "Really, Alec, you've danced with me more than Faith. And I do want her to have a good time."

"Oh, sorry."

"Of course I know she's still a child. And if you find her a little reserved—after all, that's Boston——"

"I understand," said Alec.

Later, Caroline had a suggestion: It would be so cute to go riding in one of those quaint carriages. They take you all around the island. But when they hailed one, she said, "Why don't just you and Faith go? John and I are pretty tired——"

Faith said, close to him, "It proves the lady trusts me."

"No. It proves she's convinced by now that I'm a harmless dodo."

"But I don't think that. And I'm not angry with you." She leaned toward him, and a sudden passionate conviction was in her voice: "Because I can get any man I want, any

time I want him—on my own terms. For my own purposes. Do you doubt that, Alec?"

"Nope. I've seen it happen."

"Not quite the way I'd make it happen." She laughed. "All right, then." She flung herself toward him, and kissed him on the face, the lips, pressing her body expertly against him—— She tapped on the driver's seat.

"Very well, driver, this little boy needs his sleep."

And sitting on his bed in the hotel, with her lipstick on him and his blood rising and her bed a partition away, Alec thought: *That's always my weakness. I never know whether I want something, or whether it's worth the trouble.*

He raised his window. *Something about the air in these parts,* he thought. *It's not so clean as in Nevada. Or maybe it's myself, my own black cowardly little soul, I'm smelling.*

I wonder how Webb Carlson is tonight.

He held a shoe out, dropped it thoughtfully on the floor. *I feel like a soldier, plenty afraid of the big battle there'll be tomorrow.*

O'MARA · WINTER

I

EVERY TIME O'Mara saw Doc Maynor going in to treat his mother, he thought of a book he'd had, when he lived in Aunt Catherine's house. The book was called *Sex and the Sex Life*. Nothing in it was new to O'Mara, but much in it probably would be new to Aunt Catherine, and he'd kept it hidden beneath two sweaters in a back corner of his bureau. That book was crazy. It said a woman couldn't have a baby after she was forty-five.

O'Mara's mother was almost forty-seven, and her baby was four months old.

Doc came limping down the front steps. O'Mara stopped polishing Frank Madeira's car and said, "How is she, doc?"

Doc Maynor burped. Even from here you could see the spots, red and gray, on his coat. The red spots were blood, but no one had ever been able to analyze the gray ones. His hat was tattered, he didn't own an X-ray machine, and some people said they wouldn't have him for a dog, but O'Mara's father always had him. "Hi, Stevie. Christmas, I didn't recognize you!"

O'Mara flushed. Doc Maynor had dragged him into the world (he had dragged the other O'Mara children into it also, had eased one gently out); you would never be adult to Doc. But O'Mara said, "I thought childbearing was a natural function, doc."

"Oh, it is, Stevie; sure. She'll be all right. A bit of a rest—— Her kidneys have had a little strain."

"Oh."

"Probably strained them when you were born, Stevie."

"When I—— She's had two kids since then!"

"I know, I know. The way it goes." Doc Maynor frowned. "Your mother was always sort of frail, Stevie. She's had six. That's about eight or ten for a strong woman. But she'll be all right. If you could have someone in to do the work——"

His hands waved the idea away. "You working, Stevie?"

"Sure. I've got a pretty good job with Frank Madeira."

"Good. Fine." Doc turned to his car, which was as untidy as he; a tire was soft. "I bet your ma was glad to hear that."

"Yeah," O'Mara said. "Yes, she was glad, all right."

Doc crawled into his car and grasped the wheel. He tore the gear-shift out of neutral into first and roared out of sight, still in first. O'Mara shook his head in wonderment. No matter how long he lived, no matter how the world progressed, Doc Maynor would forever drive an automobile the way he drove a horse.

2

Three days after he came home from college, O'Mara said to his mother: "I'm getting a job today."

"That's good, son." No belief was in his mother's voice.

"I'll tell you about it later." . . . He expected the red-headed girl in Frank Madeira's office would have forgotten him, but she hadn't.

"Oh, hello." Her smooth hip rubbed against him as she showed him in to Madeira.

O'Mara came to the point. "You said once you might have a job for me."

"Yeah. Things were different then." Madeira grunted, rubbing his chin. He was wearing one of those diagonally striped silk ties, the kind the co-op sold for two-fifty, and his cheeks

were fat. *So it's going to be the same*, O'Mara thought desperately, *the same old line I heard in the mill, the stores, the coal company, the newspaper*——

Madeira was staring at him.

"How old are you, kid?"

O'Mara sat up. His cheeks were hot.

"Never mind. You look about seventeen—that's the point. Now, now, don't get sore. It's a break." Madeira wrote on a scratch pad. "Here, go see Cap'n Winkler. He may have a job—I don't know what. I'll call him up."

"Thanks a lot!"

"Don't blame me if you don't want it." . . . The redhead smiled up at him brightly. Her hair was washed out and her face reminded him of a stratified rock formation on Little Nahant. "Good-*by*." *I'll look you up some night*, O'Mara was thinking, *some night in a total eclipse of the moon.*

The address was on Front Street. The sign said: *Furniture. New, Used and Antique.* There were no customers in the store. A wiry little man with a red face came out of the shadows and said, "Umph?"

"I'm Steve O'Mara. Madeira sent me."

"Um. Come in here. Sit down, for Christ's sake." He had a little office, with a roll-top desk. "I'm Cap'n Winkler. Home is the sailor, home from sea——" Wrinkles were around his eyes and his eyes were small in the weather-beaten face. O'Mara thought, *This man is no fool. He may talk like one.*

"Madeira said you might have a job."

"Um." Cap'n Winkler sat and gazed at him, the way Madeira had. *What the hell?* "Umph. Nice, clean-cut college boy. Innocent as a locked-up virgin in a nunnery. Uh hum."

Um hum.

"Well, I got a job for you—*if* you want it."

"I'll take it."

Cap'n Winkler seemed to ignore that. "The pay is thirty dollars a week."

"What would I do?"

"Well, mostly you'd drive an auto. The rest of the time you'd wait around and see if we had any odd jobs."

Thirty bucks a week for driving a car and hanging around. I'm dreaming, O'Mara thought, *and what's the catch?*

"A soft berth," Cap'n Winkler said, "soft as—till something goes wrong. Then it's tough. And you can't go crying to anyone."

"I see." *I don't see.*

"You drive an automobile," Cap'n Winkler said softly. "What's in it?"

"Oh," said O'Mara. "*Oh.*"

Cap'n Winkler laughed, his face wrinkling. "Right! Cases and cases of oh. . . . Well, want it or don't you? And you can't go crying to mama?"

"I'll take it."

"Then you'll be here at nine," Cap'n Winkler said, "tonight."

At nine, Cap'n Winkler let him into the dark store. "Down here. Watch out for the stairs. . . . We got men could do this," Cap'n Winkler said, "but the less they do, the less they know. . . . Christ, stop gawkin'!"

The cellar was lined with cases—rye, brandy, scotch. Cap'n Winkler led the way past them to a door. Beyond the door was a garage and a black car. "Here's your baby."

He took up the rear floor-board of the car. Beneath it was a large compartment. He lifted off the rear seat and it was a shell. Where the springs and upholstery should have been, there was space.

Cap'n Winkler chuckled. "O.K. Fill her up!"

Under his direction O'Mara lugged cases to the car. "Where do I go?"

"Show you, first time around. After that you go by yourself. You see what you'll look like? A nice little college boy in his old man's car. And take a girl."

"What?"

"Take a girl, whenever you can. Suppose the cops see you driving right up to a speak—what are you? Just a nice young couple out on a lark. They'll never bother you. Christ, what a job!"

O'Mara had to laugh. "I get paid for this?"

"Sure. Why, the hardest thing you'll have to do is not scratch the car. Frank wouldn't like it."

"Who?"

"Frank. Frank Madeira. It's his car, ain't it?"

"Oh," said O'Mara. "Oh, sure."

The job was so easy it was nearly dull. Most of the speakeasies he had been to before—some were down Fall River way, most were on the Cape—and the rest were easy to find. Twice he got a little twisted on back roads. Each time he simply asked a cop where the place was and the cop told him. A motorcycle cop up near Wareham gave him a break one night. He was within a quarter mile of the speakeasy when this cop flagged him down.

O'Mara was nervous, though he'd been stopped and examined in a routine way before. The girl he had with him began to giggle. The cop whispered in his left ear, "They're raiding the joint. Feds. Might go through your car."

"Thanks." O'Mara pulled off onto a sandy road behind pine trees. The girl giggled some more. He had to pretend he wanted to neck and she had been eating garlic. When he got back to the highway, the cop waved his hand, the go-ahead signal. That was a good cop.

If he could, he made a date for delivery night. Girls were

usually content to go to a speakeasy, though he did have trouble with one who insisted on seeing Dorothy Mackail in *The Reckless Hour,* when he had a delivery to make out in Chatham. If he didn't have a date, he looked around town a while for someone he knew. That was how he happened to take Felicia Zielinski, that unforgettable night. . . .

As a last resort he'd try to pick up someone he didn't know. That was risky, the results often bad. The girl had B. O., or she knew a better place, or she'd get drunk in the speakeasy and wouldn't want to go home. He always parked the car around back. If alone, he helped unload it; with a girl, he went in for a drink and when he came out again the car was empty.

It was a soft job, all right. During the afternoon he hung around Madeira's office and did little errands—cashed a check, got the car greased, brought messages to and from Cap'n Winkler—Madeira no longer pretended he and Winkler weren't partners.

O'Mara could see that Madeira trusted him more and more as time went on. Once he delivered an envelope to a cop in Fall River, and another to that motorcycle cop near Wareham. O'Mara did what he was told, asked no questions, kept his mouth shut. That was what Madeira liked.

Such was the job he got, the day he went to see Frank Madeira.

His mother's face seemed to lighten all over. "Oh, Stevie! And such good pay! Just what is it that you do?"

"Well, I'm Madeira's assistant. Sort of a law clerk, I guess you'd call me."

"Why, that's a fine job! I know your father will be glad to hear it."

"Yeah," O'Mara said dubiously. *The Old Man wasn't born yesterday. But he wouldn't be in a position to say very much, being out of work himself.*

"He's not drinking, Stevie."

"No."

His mother sighed. "Now if I could only go to church, everything would be fine." She smiled wistfully. "But I get so tired when I do."

"I know."

"Promise me you'll go to church for me."

"Sure, Ma." His mother had always enjoyed going to church—it was being with God, it was an hour of peace and quiet, it was seeing people when Mass was over. Now on Sundays he often saw her fingering her rosary, but it wasn't the same.

His mother had the damnedest pleasures. Auctions she liked, too—someone was always selling out the contents of one of the old houses around town. Once he'd gone with her, and seen that little wistful look come to her face when the auctioneer held up something she couldn't afford. But when it was sold, she'd look happy—happy for the person who'd bought it, O'Mara guessed, and if she knew the person she'd hold the thing in her hands—exclaim over it—give it back with a smile. Sometimes she came home with things she herself had bought—a salt-cellar, an old pair of scissors—and her face would wear a look of secret delight, like a child's. And the salt-cellar was no good and the scissors were broken. The Old Man would make fun of them, but she didn't mind. She'd sit and look at them. . . . She liked whist parties, too, but the Old Man wouldn't go.

"Well, anyway, I've a lot to do," she'd say; and that was true, with all the sewing and ironing there was. The Old Man would sit in a corner smoking his pipe.

"It's all I live for, Stevie."

"What?"

"To see you all grown up. Your brother Pat's grown up now, and the girls will be too. But it's you I'm proudest of."

"Huh?"

"Yes, you, Stevie. That's why I'm glad you got the job."

"Oh," said O'Mara. "Well, thanks, Ma."

Jesus Christ, he was thinking. *Holy, jumping, Jesus Christ.*

3

Father Dineen always said you'd never have any luck if you didn't support your own church in your own parish. Twice O'Mara journeyed to the eleven o'clock Mass at the Polish church, in the sole hope of meeting Felicia—he hadn't seen her since that night, she didn't have a telephone—and twice he decided Father Dineen was right.

He tried the nine o'clock Mass, and was forced to a sad conclusion. He would have to go to the eight.

His head was splitting, the Old Man swore he was just coming in, but he made it. And she was there all right, coming out of church with her mother. Before that bleak building, among these tired and nondescript people, she was more beautiful than ever. She waved at him, but O'Mara just tipped his hat. Felicia's mother, a gaunt woman, was glaring at him as though she could read his mind; or maybe she always looked like that. O'Mara wasn't encouraged. Felicia went on down the walk, swinging her lovely hips, talking a strange gibberish to her mother. *Try something else,* thought O'Mara.

He spent the next afternoon studying the telephone book. There was no one else in the office, and he had nothing else to do. Somebody on her street must have a phone. Here was a person named St. Andre.

"I wonder if I could speak to Felicia Zielinski, if it's not——"

"Yes, certainly."

No surprise. She must always use that phone. That must be the way that bastard Standler—— "Hello, this is Steve O'Mara."

"Oh, hello." There was a wild little leap in her voice, of surprise or pleasure. O'Mara grinned.

"How about going out some night this week?"

He could tell she was hesitating, thinking about it, realizing what it meant. O'Mara could feel his blood racing. *He would tell her that sometime, how she could get him all hot and bothered even over the telephone.* She said, "No."

"Afraid?"

"No, it's not that." Her voice seemed to lower. "I—I'm thinking you over."

"I see." He was silent; could hear her breathing. "Well, let me know, will you? Will you do that?"

"Yes."

"Until then——" He leaned back in Frank Madeira's chair. *So she was thinking him over, so he still had a chance. So when she did make up her mind, perhaps she would come to him, body and soul.*

Especially body. He grinned, swiveling around in the chair, which squeaked. *She was a honey. You would never know she was a Polack. When she spoke it, it seemed queer and unreal, like the kids in school talking French. Her breasts were round and full, and soft. Her lips——*

A guy could go crazy, thinking of things like that. Suppose you had her in bed——

A guy could go crazy, just sitting here, if he just thought and thought and didn't do a thing about it.

Someone was coming up the stairs. O'Mara swung around from the desk. He wouldn't want Madeira to think he was going through the drawers. But it was only the redhead.

"Hi, kid."

"Hello, grandma."

She swaggered to her own desk. O'Mara watched her. *She was old and battered, all right. Still——*

It's awfully warm in here, O'Mara thought. *Someone ought to open a window.*

He was standing beside her desk. "Like to go out tonight, friend?"

The redhead looked him up and down. "Comes a pause in the day's occupation, that is known as the Children's Hour."

"Well?"

She looked him in the eyes. "Why not?"

But he had a lot of trouble with the redhead. She wouldn't let him make any deliveries when he took her out. "What d'you think I am, a sucker?" In fact, she insisted on going to a place they had never done business with, and O'Mara had to pay for the drinks. Scotch and soda she ordered, at seventy-five cents a throw.

Then afterward, she was queer. She'd pet all right—she was hot stuff—to a point. Then she'd stop, as though her emotions had four-wheel brakes.

"What's the matter?"

"What have you got in your pocket?"

"I don't get you."

The redhead straightened her dress. "Well, you sophomore." She seemed to get nastier and nastier, all the way home. "Come around and see me sometime, when you grow up to be a great big junior."

O'Mara couldn't figure her out.

4

Father Dineen preached a sermon on Christmas and on Easter, and when something aroused him.

He seemed to be aroused today. O'Mara leaned forward expectantly, as the old man's rich brogue filled the church.

"What is it that is causing the present woes of the world—the suffering, the misery, that we all call by the name, Depression? Is it over-production? No. Is it under-consumption?

No. Is it the tariff or the stock market? No! It is because we have turned our backs on God.

"God holds out His blessed arms and says, 'Come to Me,' but the world has turned away from Him. Heathen pleasures rule us. Pagan philosophies fill our schools. The schools have rejected God. Let us have none of God, they say, and in truth they have none—all this in the name of the great ideal, the separation of Church and State.

"Ah, yes, we have separated Church and State! We have cast God out of the State—and all around us, in the chaos and misery that dominate the world today, you may see the result. . . .

"In this decay the institution of the family itself is not above attack. There is in the legislature of this state, at this moment, a bill which will destroy the very foundation of the Christian family! It is a bill to legalize that which is now illegal—the manufacture, sale and dissemination of contraceptive devices—to legalize the terrible sin of birth control.

"Birth control! They would fly in the face of God and say, This sin is not a sin, it is permissible, it is more than permissible—it is our right, because we say so. They would open the floodgates of immorality, destroy the last restraints on pleasure-mad youth and attack the very purpose of the holy sacrament of marriage!

"For what is the true purpose of marriage? God through His holy Church has laid it down that the purpose of marriage is the production of children. That is its purpose. And to any married woman who says, 'I have had enough children,' the answer is that that is not for her to decide. God will decide. And to any woman who says, 'My health may suffer,' the answer is twofold: first, medical science does not bear out her fears; and, second, even if it did, nothing can justify a sin. We must all suffer for our faith; and what is suffering in this world compared to the loss of our immortal souls? . . .

"Some say, 'This law is already being evaded, and we would merely legalize a common practice.' Many of God's laws are evaded. The law against murder is evaded. Shall we then repeal it?

"Others say, 'We are not of your faith, we do not believe in this matter as you do, and you have no right to restrict our liberty.' But this is not *our* law! This is God's law! The fact that we are the only Church which dares uphold it is something for which they must answer—not we. . . . And so if this vicious attack on morality and the Christian family, this so-called birth control bill, ever comes to a referendum, it will be the sacred duty of every Catholic to go to the polls and vote against it. To that sacred duty, under pain of mortal sin, I summon you. . . .

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

He stepped down wearily from the pulpit. The old man could talk when he felt like it, O'Mara was thinking. He had studied in Canada and in Rome, and had been twenty years a priest in this parish.

O'Mara walked alone down the street. He had seen no point in traveling to the Polish church today. At the corner he saw a number of fellows going into the drugstore and, thinking of what Father Dineen had said, he smiled. There was a law that sure was evaded.

And right there, with one foot in the air, he stopped. *Catfish!* he thought. *Catfish, am I dumb!*

For now, then and there, he understood what the redhead had meant.

5

The more he thought about Felicia Zielinski, the more he believed he should have more money. He spoke to Madeira about it. Madeira shrugged.

"Ask Cap'n Winkler. He hired you, didn't he?"

O'Mara could see the advantage of a partnership. Cap'n Winkler said, "Ask Madeira."

"He said it was up to you."

"Well, it's all right with me, but you ain't worth much, son. You don't do much."

O'Mara took in a deep breath. "Teach me more." . . .

That was how he happened to be taking a boat ride with Cap'n Winkler. *Show you the whole milk route,* Cap'n Winkler said, *and then you can fill in anywhere.*

The boat was tucked beside a dock across the river—a long cabin cruiser. Someone was standing on her deck in the darkness. O'Mara couldn't make out his face. No wonder—a Negro.

Cap'n Winkler said, "Santos, meet Steve. He's going out with us."

The Negro nodded and dropped his right hand from his left shoulder. *Maybe he's got a gun there,* O'Mara thought, *or maybe he just itches.*

Cap'n Winkler flashed his light over the boat. The words on the stern said: *Jenny Clinton III.* O'Mara whistled. "Some tub."

"New acquisition," Cap'n Winkler chuckled. "Step lively. . . . Used to belong to Standler. Know the Standlers?"

O'Mara spat into the harbor. "Yeah."

Cap'n Winkler chuckled. "See you do. Old sea-going family. Ever hear about the time old Elias Standler sailed over to the Gold Coast and fetched back a cargo of niggers? They don't talk about *that.* . . . Christ, yes. Elias fetched them slaves down to Sea Island and made a fortune on 'em. Just one trip he made enough to stay in whaling a couple more years."

"I thought there was a lot of money in whaling."

"Not by then, there wasn't. Christ, no. . . . Santos. Cast off."

The boat slid quietly beyond Fort Phoenix. O'Mara had to watch the shore lights to realize they were moving. Just outside the harbor Cap'n Winkler turned off his running lights. It was a long while before they saw another craft, a dim white shape to starboard.

Cap'n Winkler cut the motor.

"Coast Guard?"

"Yep. Should they ask, we're fishin'."

But the cutter did not hail them, or turn or follow. The *Jenny Clinton III* went on—O'Mara swore they must be more than thirty miles out, though Cap'n Winkler said fifteen. They were somewhere south of the Vinyard and Nantucket, that was all O'Mara knew. The waves were bigger now, the wind fiercer, and the *Jenny Clinton* was suddenly a very little boat. O'Mara began to feel a trifle ill.

He felt a great deal worse when Cap'n Winkler cut the motor and left it cut. He had never known a boat could toss so. "We're drifting, Cap'n."

"It's allowed for, son. See the light?"

It was blinking off and on, like a lighthouse.

Cap'n Winkler cackled, "'I have a rendezvous with death——' Shitass poem," and got the *Jenny Clinton* under way. The light came swiftly towards them. It was on a low schooner which, beside the *Jenny Clinton*, seemed enormous. Cap'n Winkler cursed continuously as he maneuvered; they were lashed to the schooner; O'Mara let his breath out.

"Git going," said Cap'n Winkler.

Men on the schooner were already handing down cases of liquor. Others had jumped to the *Jenny Clinton* in order to help O'Mara and Santos. Cap'n Winkler climbed a rope ladder to the schooner. By the time he returned, the cases were stowed away under tarpaulin on the bow, the stern, in the cabin.

"Cast off!" The schooner slid away into darkness. The *Jenny Clinton III* trudged heavily through the seas.

"See—it's easy," said Cap'n Winkler.

"Sure."

"—if she don't ram, or the revenuers don't git you, or she don't just plain founder——"

They headed in toward shore, past the white roaring beach at Horseneck, past Acoaxet, up the river, into a deep cove. A truck was waiting beside the dock.

Cap'n Winkler had to yell, "Carl!"

A man came sleepily from the truck. O'Mara never saw him more than dimly, he was so weary from handling the cases.

"We'll ride with you, Carl. . . . Santos, take her back."

The ride was nothing. They drove by way of Westport and North Dartmouth into the city, to the rear of the furniture store. They transferred the cases once again. Carl took the truck away. O'Mara went home and slept ten hours.

The next day Cap'n Winkler told him his pay would be forty dollars.

"Thanks!" He was thinking of Felicia: *I can give you things now. If you want them*—— "I'll try to be worth it."

Cap'n Winkler spat. "It ain't just for what you're worth, son. It's for what you know. For keeping your mouth shut."

"Oh. But you can trust me."

"Git one thing straight," Cap'n Winkler said, "about this game. I can't trust you. You can't trust me. No one can trust Madeira."

"I git it," said O'Mara.

It was on the following Saturday night that he met Felicia Zielinski.

She was hurrying along Purchase Street. She seemed a little startled when he spoke to her.

"Oh, hello."

Even her voice was tense, vibrant with a strange emotion.

"I could drive you home——"

"Why not?" But home was where she insisted on going; no, no drink; no ride; nothing. "Believe it or not, I'm in a hurry to see my mother."

In front of her house, she sat as far away from him as the width of the seat allowed; her fingers were already on the doorhandle.

Before she went, having said almost nothing so far, she paused long enough to ask, "How's the job?"

It was the only opening he was likely to have. "Swell. I'm making pretty good money now——"

"Glad to hear it."

He reached out and grabbed her hand—a long distance, but he made it. "Look, I'm crazy about you. You know I've always been, can't you see? And I'd like to ask you to get married but the way things are——"

It made no sense in his own ears, though he knew exactly what he wanted to say.

Felicia said nothing. In the dark, he couldn't see her face.

His hand slid up her arm. "And if I'm crazy about you, if you could—— I could give you money if you needed it—— And don't be sore, I'm only trying to tell you how much——"

She shook her arm free. Her voice was clear and precise: "Are you trying to say that you'd like to have sexual intercourse with me?"

He was afraid she'd be angry, but she didn't sound angry.

"Yes."

Her voice was rich, perhaps with laughter: "Thank you"—the words seemed a little choked—"for the compliment. I'm sure you meant it that way. I—I'll keep it in mind."

She was out of the car. He was a fool—right now, so far—but at least she hadn't been angry. It didn't seem quite like her.

"Good night, Mr. O'Mara."

"Felicia, is anything the matter?"

"No, nothing. Only——" She paused. Clearly her voice was touched with hysteria now. "Only, so much has happened on one night. To receive such a complimentary offer. And to be fired."

"What?"

"Fired. Bounced. Canned. Discharged. Dismissed. They usually," she said, "call it unemployed."

"*Oh, Felicia!*"

"You sound," she said, "like a calf with the bellyache. Good night." She turned away. Her heels struck loudly, sharply on the walk. In the dim light from her hallway he could see that her head was high.

6

Afterward he remembered almost everything that happened, because that was an important day. His mother said—he was still half asleep—"Don't be late for work." He remembered how bright the sun was, though the street looked cold.

He had been irritated because his breakfast wasn't made. His mother was too ill to get up and make it. She was often that way, these days.

"I'm so glad you're working, Stevie. It's my only comfort."

"You'll be all right, Ma."

"Sure, only—I don't seem to get my strength back."

She did look weak, and a little lonely, lying there. Perhaps he should have stayed and talked with her a while, but he had no time to talk.

He was driving back from Onset when he first got the idea. He'd been down to Fall River, as far north as Taunton, and it seemed a waste of time.

Back in the office he found Cap'n Winkler dangling his legs over Madeira's chair. "Look, Cap'n, I was thinking——"

"Commendable, lad, commendable."

"No, look—why don't we sell this rotgut in the city here? There certainly are enough places."

Cap'n Winkler chuckled. "Well, son, we just don't have the volume. Make a good margin on what we haul but we just don't haul enough."

"Why don't we peddle it all here, then? Madeira knows enough big shots——"

Cap'n Winkler's little eyes studied him.

"Seems foolish not to make money in the easiest place we could make it."

Cap'n Winkler seemed enormously amused. "Way you're heading, seems as though you'd soon figure it out anyhow."

"You bet."

"May as well tell you. . . . We do sell here, in a way. We got the wholesale contract for the whole damned city."

"But we don't ever deliver—or do we?"

"Nope. Others do the delivering. They pay us a small fee for the privilege."

"Oh. Sub-contractors, eh?"

"That's the idea."

"How do we get away with it?"

"Why," Cap'n Winkler chuckled, "Frankie's got 'em so tied up, if they don't pay they don't wholesale. Just like the retailers, if they don't kick in, they find their backyard full of cops."

"But how? Who puts the pressure on for us?"

Cap'n Winkler shook his head. "Don't ask too much, son. We got friends, that's all."

"And the same friends," O'Mara said, "who make the distributors kick in to Madeira are the ones who collect from the speaks."

"For a college boy," Cap'n Winkler said, "you're pretty bright." . . . O'Mara went down and got a hamburger.

Later, Madeira said, "Take this list. Speaks and who to see. Get an envelope from each."

"Oh—so Winkler told you."

"Yeah. He thought it was quite a joke. Says you had it all figured out."

"Well——"

"If you're so damned bright," Madeira said, "we may as well use your knowledge."

"O. K." . . . *More work. I've been promoted—I'm bagman now.* He had a feeling Madeira was laughing at him, as he went out.

O. K., let him laugh. I'll hit him up for another raise.

It was late when he came home. He had been inside five speakeasies, only two of which he had known existed. They were thriving and dirty. Walking down his own street, he took in a deep breath. *Funny*, he thought, *this is like another world.*

But in his own house he could see that something was wrong. Every light seemed to be on. O'Mara ran up the walk. The Old Man was standing in the hallway, gazing at him with round and gloomy eyes.

"Hello, son," the Old Man said. He wasn't drunk, he must have known what the time was, but he didn't say another word. Slowly, he went upstairs.

O'Mara would have gone after him, but someone was on the way down——

"Doc! How is she?"

Doc Maynor shrugged. He looked old and sick, beneath the glare of the hall light. "I don't know. I don't like those kidneys, Stevie." He yawned, digging his fingers into his eyes. "God, how I need sleep. Well——"

"Doc, will she——"

Doc Maynor pushed his bag toward the door; stumbled after it. He seemed to be talking in his sleep. "I dunno, Stevie. I suppose the human body can stand just so much—so much work, so much childbearing—— Well. Good night, Stevie."

He closed the door softly, as one used to closing doors in the last hours of the night. O'Mara took one step up the stairs—and stopped.

Father Dineen was looking down at him.

"Father——"

The old priest came quietly down and put a hand on O'Mara's shoulder. "Stevie. I haven't seen you for a long time."

"Father—how is she?"

"Your mother's sleeping now, Stevie. The rest will be good for her."

The old man's face was bright with kindness. The pressure of his hand tightened. "Go to bed now, my boy. Pray for her. Prayers can do her more good—— I will say my Mass for her this morning, and remember her in prayers throughout the day."

"Thank you, Father."

He held the door, watched the old man walk tranquilly up the street. He had been close to panic when he saw Doc Maynor, but he felt better now. The priest had calmed him somehow. In an hour or so Father Dineen would be getting up to say the first Mass. He had not looked tired, or complained about losing sleep.

O'Mara looked after him, till he disappeared in the morning fog.

And there goes a great guy, O'Mara was thinking—*a really great, a truly swell guy*.

He closed the door on the morning.

7

There were men and women he had never seen before, and some remembered only dimly from his childhood. His mother had had a great many relatives, at least half of whom believed his name was Pat.

His mother looked younger, almost pretty, lying in her coffin.

The Old Man said—standing with his hand on O'Mara's shoulder, smelling a little of cigars—"Your mother always liked flowers, Stevie."

"And never had any."

"She has plenty now," the Old Man said. . . . They had been unable to find a suitable dress in his mother's wardrobe after she died, and his sisters had had to buy one.

The women were in the dining room. That made it hard on the men, who had to sit in the parlor with the coffin. After they knelt and blessed themselves and said a prayer and blessed themselves again, they looked around diffidently for a chair. They stared solemnly at the coffin, looked up only when someone new came in, spoke in whispers. Three had already left when brother Pat said, "Why don't you fellows come out in the kitchen?"

That was better. The Old Man passed around a box of cigars, and the men relaxed. They began to talk, first about wakes. *Wakes today are not what they used to be. Recall when people thought nothing of sitting up all night with a stiff?* The Old Man asked politely whether anyone would take a glass of home brew. Several would. Pat thrust his head into the kitchen and said excitedly, "Pa, Stevie—Madeira's here!"

O'Mara could tell by the stiff way the Old Man shook hands that he didn't like Madeira, though he was courteous enough. As soon as Madeira came into the kitchen the other

men seemed naive and crude by contrast. He sat down quietly in a corner. The men were telling stories now. "Ever hear about the lady that tickled the kangaroo?" One brought out an amber bottle and looked inquiringly at the Old Man. The Old Man said, "Go ahead, lad, I'm glad you've got it." There was another flurry at the front door and a big man coming in.

O'Mara recognized him at once—the impressive physique, the big face, the gray temples. He heard the Old Man say, "Mayor Tierney, it's nice of you to come," and knew the Old Man meant it.

The men in the kitchen were impressed, he could tell. First Madeira, and now the Mayor——

When Tierney finished his prayers he came into the kitchen, shook hands all around, and said, "Go right ahead, boys—don't mind me." The men tried to get the stories going again, but were a bit self-conscious. Then the Mayor said, "How about the farmer's daughter and the three salesmen and the bear?" and told it, a mild story, but everyone laughed. Someone whispered, "Regular guy, ain't he?" Everyone relaxed again, the amber bottle was passed around, and the stories were better than ever. Out in the dining room the women were talking at a great rate.

Madeira had waved to the Mayor when he came in, and O'Mara wished—— Sure enough, Madeira got hold of Tierney and brought him over by the stove where O'Mara sat. "Mayor, I want you to meet a bright young man."

Jim Tierney shook hands, with a friendly grin. "Glad to meet you, Steve. I've heard a lot about you." He glanced at Madeira as though there were a secret joke between them. Someone called, "Hey, Jim!" and Tierney went back to hear another story. You could see that everyone liked Mayor Tierney.

At midnight some of the men looked around for their

hats, but the Old Man said, "Please stay. We'll be having the rosary in a minute."

Men and women, sober now, crowded quietly into the parlor and knelt before the coffin. The Old Man said suddenly, "Mayor Tierney, I'm going to ask you to lead us, if you will."

Jim Tierney knelt on the floor, his back broad and straight. He had taken a pearl rosary from his coat pocket. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." His rich, clear voice filled the room. All blessed themselves. The moment seemed almost holy.

FELICIA · SUMMER

I

THE STORE MANAGER had been very nice about it.

"I hope you'll understand, Miss Zielinski. All these other women were here before you and some have husbands, kids——"

"Of course, it's quite all right." She could have told him about Mother and the twins. She didn't. She thought: *Mark's mother comes in here sometimes. I only hope she doesn't notice, or doesn't tell——*

The store manager said, "If I'd known I had to do this kind of thing, I'd never have taken the damned job."

"It's quite all right." . . . She could almost hear Mother thinking, when she told her about it.

"Well, so now we have the money in the bank."

"How long will it last, Ma?"

"Well——" And she could almost hear Mother thinking: *We will have less of this, do without that, buy the cheaper cuts of meat.* . . . "A year, if we're clever. Before then, we'll both have work again."

"Sure, Ma." *Oh, sure, Ma. So let's forget it, if we can.*

"Ma, did the Sikorskis hear from Uncle Anzelm?"

"Yes, next week he comes. They are to have a big party for him at the house."

"Good. I'll drink a quart myself."

"That's what I don't like," Mother said. "They'll ask you about your job, and you'll have to say——"

"Ma, can't you understand it's nothing to be ashamed of?"

Mother shook her head. And that was right: Mother would never understand it.

"I won't be the only one, you know."

Mother shook her head. . . . *Why, yes,* Felicia thought, *it's like a club. And I'm in it now. I, the smartest and the best, the pride of the street, A-minus in English, A in math, A-plus in home economics, girls' scholarship and leadership award. Now I'm in it too. . . .*

Just then she heard O'Mara turning his car around before the house. He must have been sitting there thinking her over. Judging by the exuberant way he raced the engine, he was not discouraged.

She picked up her coat and went into the bedroom. *So long, wolf. Little Red Ridinghood is off to bed.*

2

She could hardly hear Mark, the sea was so loud. No matter. As long as he talked about final exams and himself, just so long she wouldn't have to tell him about her job. This was no night for unpleasantness.

Mark's coat had a nice rough feel. She had had to put her arm around him, to stay on the rock. Of all the rocks below Fort Phoenix, this was the best one—the only one, where you could sit in peace, safe from the jump of the tide. She and Mark knew it well, considered it their own.

"Probably I talk too much."

"I always like to listen to you, Mark."

She had not seen him for weeks. That didn't bother her. It never had. There were young couples of her acquaintance who had to see each other every night—otherwise they were lonely or dubious or suspicious. Thank God, she and Mark weren't like them. Their love—they had never named it that,

she remembered, half listening, looking at the sea—had a surer foundation.

She watched the lights going on across the bay. The sun was almost gone now, and a little fishing trawler was vague as it bounced into the harbor. She tried to picture a great whaler driving past this point, battered and sea-swept, home from the Aleutians or South Pacific—tried to see it as though it were really there. She could not. All she could see were the dark mills on the other shore.

Mark's arm tightened around her. . . . The biggest ship going past here tonight would be the Nantucket boat. People in parked cars would wait for it, blow their horns, and the captain would whimsically point his searchlight over here to see if anyone were necking on the rocks.

Mark's arms were both around her now. She turned a little toward him. She thought one of the best things about marriage must be the end it brought to love-making out-of-doors. Love should have some dignity. Even so, she had always thought of themselves as different from other couples they saw here, or in the park, or on the dark lanes of North Dartmouth. She thought so now.

Mark said, "So just another year, and then——"

"What will you do, Mark?"

His eyes were close to her. And she was almost ill with a sudden panic, sure that this would be no kiss, no mere embrace, but something new. He said, slowly and distinctly, "I know one thing I want to do. Be married. To you."

Her throat was choked and his face seemed to tip sideways in a dark world and the very worst thing had happened. He knew about her, then. His mother—— She had to say something. "Married when, Mark?"

"As soon as we can, but we can settle that. You've got to answer me first."

"No, Mark."

So the very worst thing had happened and it was over. His mother—perhaps she'd planned it all this way. No, no, not subtle enough. Or was she? . . . His arms had relaxed, till she almost slipped from the rock.

"Of course," he said, "we haven't said much about love and I never asked——"

"It's not that, Mark." *Ask me now, I'll never tell you.*

"Then why not?"

She stood up, free of him. "I should think it's obvious why not." She looked down blindly at the rock. "You never asked me before to marry you. I never thought when you did I'd feel—insulted."

She turned up the little cliff toward Fort Phoenix. Mark scrambled after her, yelling, "Well, I wish you'd explain——"

"It's no good explaining anything, now."

"This childish refusal to discuss things——"

She turned, before the old guns of the fort. "I can do without lectures. I may not have gone to Harvard——"

"I think that remark——"

The boat whistle made her jump. She saw the searchlight, of an incredible power, picking out the buoys. Silently, as by habit, they turned and watched the Nantucket boat come in.

The searchlight swung toward them, hunted them out, found them. They stood half-blinded in its glare. Felicia put a hand over her eyes.

She thought if she didn't the captain might see her tears.

3

Sometimes that ride home on the streetcar was a thousand miles. It was a thousand today, though the sun was bright and little clouds drifted pleasantly from the sea.

Mother said, "Pete Zonak was here."

"Oh."

"He says you have refused to see him lately."

"What's he do, come crying to you?"

With dignity, Mother refused to answer.

"If he's so smart, why isn't he at his garage?"

Mother said complacently, "He has a man to look after it for him now."

"Oh. Well, all I'd want from him is a job myself. Perhaps he'd let me wipe off the cars——"

Mother looked up at her quickly.

Felicia shook her head. "Not a thing, Ma. I tried that insurance office and the stores. In the mill they just laughed at me, in a sort of ghostly way."

"Never mind. You have been looking less than a week."

A week? A week only, since that night at Fort Phoenix? A year, Mother—it must be a year at least.

Mother said as an afterthought, "A woman should not have to work. A woman should have a good, strong, reliable man——"

Oh, God. "Ma, has Anzelm come?"

"Not yet. The Sikorskis went to Providence to fetch him home. So many got lost changing trains, in the old days. . . . And Zonak told me——"

"I got the chops, Ma."

"How much?"

"I don't remember."

"Anyhow it is too much. Next time pay less. And Zonak said the garage is doing so well——"

"Ma, someone at the door."

It was Cecile St. Andre. "Felicia, the telephone."

"Oh." She tried to sound irritated, on the way upstairs. "Just when I'm busy. The library wants a book back. Or someone after a recipe——"

But her voice kept rising and rising. Cecile was looking at her curiously. "Or maybe it's a job. Oh, wouldn't that be wonderful——"

Her feet stamped, running, on the stairs.

She delayed just a moment, saying hello to all the St. Andres, pretending there wasn't any hurry. She grabbed at the telephone.

"Hello?"

"Hello, this is Mark. For heaven's sake, listen——"

"Oh." *Stand still, walls—it's just that I climbed too far too fast.*

"Look, Felicia, the other night—when I asked you—I didn't know you weren't working. And your mother. I just found out."

"Oh!"

"No wonder you thought it funny. But good God, that isn't why I asked you——"

"You mean you would have, anyhow?"

"Of course! I did ask you anyhow."

"Oh, Mark——"

"So——" Little words, meaning everything. "Look, can I see you tonight?"

"Mark, I'm sorry. I'm going to a party."

"Oh. You see, I'm supposed to leave for Bar Harbor in the morning."

"Well——" She could feel that around her the St. Andres were tense, yet somehow confident, awaiting her decision. She said, "Why don't you be in front of my house at nine? I'll get out to you somehow."

"Swell."

"Good-by."

"Good-by, darling."

She turned away, only half conscious that the St. Andres were staring at her in shocked incredulity, as at one who had

sold her soul. Hopping down the stairs, she hummed a foolish song.

Darling. There was a new one. Darling.

Her mother said, as though she had completed her thought about Zonak and gone on to another: "And Joan says her Phil Kuznicki has got a promotion in his job with the city. That is good for Joan."

"Uh-huh." *Humming.*

"But you are not like her. No job. No man. That is no good for you."

"Well, surely you wouldn't want me to marry Zonak just to have someone support me——"

"No, surely."

No. No. The song died in her throat. . . . *Look,* her mind said—*has anything really changed? Is anything different now?*

4

Uncle Anzelm was holding his reception in Sikorski's parlor. To Felicia it was like a wake, with Uncle Anzelm the corpse. Neighbors slipped into the house quietly, respectfully. They spoke in whispers. Children peered into the parlor before they dared approach.

Felicia started in with her mother, but Joan Urban caught her arm.

"Felicia. There's something I want to tell you."

"All right."

"Not now—later." Joan giggled, "You won't tell anyone if I tell you later?"

"For heaven's sake——"

"Promise?"

Felicia laughed. "Joan, you're so utterly silly. Of course I won't." They went in together to Anzelm.

He was like anyone else. His shoes were high instead of low, his collar was something out of the Gay Nineties, that was all. He looked like his brother, a bit taller, but with the same quick shrewdness in his eyes. Everyone was gathered around him now, the ice was broken. The children just stared, but the old folks gazed at him with intense and yet dreamy curiosity, as at one who has left a part not only of his own life behind him, but of theirs.

Then, after the ship, Anzelm was saying, New York.

"And what about New York, Anzelm?"

He shook his head solemnly. "I have seen Cracow and Warsaw, and Hamburg and Cherbourg too. But ah, they are not your New York. The buildings, the streets—— It is true what they say, this is the richest and greatest country."

Everyone nodded happily.

"And the train, such a train—such a rich railroad, this New York, New Hartford——"

"New York, New Haven and Hartford, Anzelm."

"Yes. Such a fine ride—I had the car nearly to myself. But there was a thing," said Uncle Anzelm.

"Yes?"

"From the window I often saw huts—perhaps an acre of them, made of old boards, tin roofs, tar paper, with crazy chimneys and the smoke coming out."

"Oh, those were *Hoovervilles*."

"Were——?"

"*Hoovervilles*. There is no word for them in Polish. Men without jobs have sometimes no other place to live."

"These men, they do not care for jobs?"

"No, no, Anzelm. There's no place for them to work."

"But"—Anzelm's dark eyes flashed—"I saw from the train a place called, I think, Breedgeport, and looking in I saw the empty factories and the machines. Surely that was a place to work?"

"No, because the owners of the factories can't pay them for working there. If they did work, and made things with the machines, no one would buy the things."

"No one has need of them?"

"No—it's just that they haven't money to buy, because they're out of work."

"I see," said Uncle Anzelm. It was clear he didn't see, and Felicia could almost feel the old folks squirming, anxious to ask their questions about the old country. Over in a corner Joan was holding hands with Phil Kuznicki, and Joan seemed gigglier than ever.

"These men in the huts," Uncle Anzelm asked, "what do they eat?"

"Food they beg, or steal from garbage cans. Some try to grow crops but the soil is poor."

Uncle Anzelm looked startled. "Then you have here a famine."

"No, no—the crops are good."

"But——"

"In fact," Mr. Sikorski said, "the farmers have raised so much the government has had to buy some of it from them. I was reading in the paper—the English paper—" he added, with a touch of pride, "the government has two hundred million bushels of wheat it doesn't know what to do with."

"Then," his brother demanded, "why doesn't the government give it to these people?"

Mr. Sikorski shrugged. In the momentary silence, even now, Felicia thought she heard Joan Urban giggle. "They say it would be bad for the people. If you give the people food or money it will destroy their—what do they say?—their morale. The government has lent many million dollars to banks and railroads but they are different, they have no morale to be destroyed as people have."

"Their morale will be destroyed if their bellies are full?"

Mr. Sikorski shrugged. "That is what is said."

"I do not understand." Uncle Anzelm frowned despondently. "I have been to school but I do not understand half what you tell me. You say your great government will not give the people wheat but in my time, in the old country, I heard of your government giving much food to the poor people of Europe. This was done by a man named Hoover."

"He is now head of the government."

"It was because of this," Anzelm said, "that in those days we thought—you know; some of you were there—we thought this the greatest, richest land on earth. The land of the opportunity, we called it, and was the place where people were wiser than anywhere. Were we wrong—or has it changed?"

No one answered him. They sat silent, waiting for him to go on.

He did not go on; and then it happened. It was a thing they all discussed long after Uncle Anzelm's questions were forgotten.

Phil Kuznicki jumped up—Felicia saw Joan trying to hold him down—and said, "I've got an announcement to make."

Everyone stared, and Kuznicki laughed. "Joan wants to throw a party to tell it, but you can still have the party. We're going to get married."

Everyone cheered, and crowded around them, and Uncle Anzelm looked pleased, as though he were in some way responsible. Felicia threw her arms around Joan; saw Mother watching them with tears in her eyes. Some of the old folks looked a bit shocked, and no doubt would criticize Kuznicki later. . . . Felicia glanced in dismay at the clock. It was twenty past nine.

She moved quietly toward the door; whispered, "Excuse me," to Mr. Sikorski; saw her mother staring at her with enormous disapproval.

6

Mark didn't see her when she came up behind his car. She opened the door herself, went in to him quickly. His arms were around her. She had not believed they would ever want to kiss each other so hard or this long.

Mark said, "I'm glad you could come, because——"

"Tell me about tomorrow, Mark."

But his mind didn't seem to be on Maine. He kept dropping the subject, and she knew what he was going to say. "I'd better go back, Mark."

"Wait."

She knew what he was going to say, but she couldn't stop him. His hands were tight on her shoulders.

"I'm still asking you, Felicia."

"Oh, Mark——"

"To get married. To decide now—and then as soon as we can. It has to be yes or no now, Felicia."

The streetlight is like moonlight, she thought, *I can see his face so plain.* "No, Mark."

I wish I couldn't see his face.

"Dear," she said, "don't you see? The other night I thought you were asking me just because—just to help me. You weren't. But nothing is really changed. Don't you see you'd still be giving me everything, I'd be giving nothing?"

"I surely don't——"

"Yes, yes, you do. You must. If we were married tomorrow —I'd be safe. I'd have everything. And Mother too, because I'd never marry you or anyone unless I knew Mother was all right."

"Of course."

"But I'd be giving nothing. Oh, you can talk about giving love, myself, but that's—— No, Mark. If I could come to you on equal terms, proudly—— No, darling. No."

He dropped his hands. "I don't know what to say."

"There's nothing to say, Mark."

They would walk as far as Sikorski's back door together. . . . She thought: *I should have known it always. I should have known we would end like this—that night at the Whalers Club, away back there in high school—always, I should have known. I should have told him so.* . . . She told him nothing.

On the back porch he said, "I think you're being very, very stubborn."

She bowed her head. "Perhaps."

She held him close to her, felt the roughness of his coat against her face, smelled the clean smell of his hair. Gently she pushed him away. He was gone, limping down the walk. Felicia waited in the shadows of the porch, till she heard his car turning, saw the red tail-light pass.

Then she walked out to the sidewalk again. She wanted a moment to herself, before she went in to Mother and the party.

She walked slowly back to the porch. Stars were high in a clear, enormous sky. She would have expected grief but suddenly, inexplicably, anger rose in her. The sound of her heels was louder and sharper on the walk.

7

The party was going good. Several had made a ring around Joan and Kuznicki. All were singing polkas, except one who was working on the top of a bottle. Women had Uncle Anzelm backed into a corner. One said, "Tell me, have you

been lately to Tarnapol?" and another, "I have a father still in Lukow—perhaps you know him——"

These places were three hundred miles apart. Felicia went into the pantry, where Mother and Mrs. Sikorski were making sandwiches. Mother muttered, "Where did you go?"

"I went to see Mark Standler."

Mother looked up quickly from the meat.

"Don't worry," Felicia said. "Don't worry, ever, any more."

She went back to the parlor. Joan was saying, "Oh, but this is Uncle Anzelm's party." And Anzelm said, "No, no——"

Theophil Komar said, "How about you, Felicia? Going to let your old sidekick get ahead of you?"

"Ah, no, not Felicia."

"She will surprise us some day—eh, Felicia?"

Felicia smiled. . . . The party went on and on. Near eleven o'clock Cecile St. Andre came in and said, "Felicia, Steve O'Mara's upstairs on the phone. I told him this was an awful time to call and if you want I'll——"

"No," Felicia said. "Wait. I'll talk to him." She found it irritating, the way Cecile just stared and stared at her.

"Why in hell shouldn't I?" she said.

O'MARA · SUMMER

I

He could see she was trying to be hilarious, in a rather grim and determined way. Her lipstick was put on widely and a trifle inaccurately, and he had never seen that tight black dress before. He grinned at her across the table. "Like this place?"

Resolutely through the smoke, Felicia smiled at him. "I like it fine."

You're a little drunk or a little strange, O'Mara thought with certainty. *Either's all right with me.*

It was, as a matter of fact, one of the very best speakeasies he knew. The liquor was safe, the waiters looked like human beings, and some of the most important people in town came here nightly. Here came one now, a gray man with an unbelievable paunch. Passing their table, he bowed to Felicia.

"How do you do?" . . . O'Mara's eyes popped.

"Colonel Marsden's a pal of yours?"

"I know him, yes. But he's not my type."

"Who is?"

"I guess you are. . . ."

Drunk or crazy, thought O'Mara, *and let's get out of here. Tonight may be the night.* "Let's go, shall we?"

"All right."

He knew the best place in the park too. You drove off the road between two rows of trees, and the trees kept all light out, unless there was a moon.

There was a moon tonight. He could see Felicia's face and her body, turned half toward him on the seat. He reached his right arm around her. For the first time her face looked undecided. Or maybe she was just waiting. He wondered whether he should suggest getting into the back seat. This was what he had waited for, and everything——

Her coat was open and her hands were down. He could see her throat. He reached his left hand out and plunged it down toward the white softness——

His hand was being taken out, pushed away. "What's the matter?"

She didn't answer. She was looking down at the floor and he thought there were tears on her face, though he didn't hear her crying. *Oh, my God!* "What's the matter?"

"I forgot," she said. "Please take me home. I forgot something."

"Oh——" He thought instantly, with a wild hope, of something he'd heard once—things girls use; carry them in their handbags. "What?"

"Myself." She lifted her face into the light. It looked suddenly old and gaunt, like her mother's. "Myself," she said.

There was a damned silly thing to say.

2

O'Mara peeled the top off a bottle. *I will get drunk for a week,* he thought. *Two weeks. That was the night and I flubbed it.*

He threw the metal peelings out the window. The Old Man would run into them with the lawnmower and give him hell. The Old Man only drank when he felt good. Now that he wasn't working, and his wife was dead, he was as great a believer in sobriety as the W. C. T. U.

I will get drunk for three weeks. Let them deliver their

liquid merchandise without me. Let the world go smash. That was the night. He took a drink.

End of summer, O'Mara was thinking, *end of summer. That was the first of summer and I haven't seen her since. Tonight she says Sorry, again. She is that rugged old British thing—Gibraltar. Impregnable. She is more than Gibraltar. She is Singapore. She is the brave French line at Verdun. Ils ne passeront pas.*

He took another drink.

He began to feel better. The wallpaper looked prettier and his chest was big. *All right,* his mind said, *I can wait. I'm waiting. There are other ways and there's still time. Time is the one thing I've plenty of, baby.*

3

Madeira was getting difficult. He seldom spoke, never smiled, sat scowling often at a newspaper.

And the work was piling up. Three times in one week O'Mara had to give Carl a hand on the truck.

The third time, he said, "What's getting into Madeira?"

"Oh," Carl said, "him."

Getting Carl to put more than three words together was the hardest part of these trips. *Were all Swedes like that?* "What's biting him?"

"Oh, him," Carl said. He drove another half mile. Turning east at Westport he said: "Guess he's worried."

"But why?"

"Way the politicians talk, they're going to end prohibition, no matter who's elected."

"I see."

"Yeah." Half a mile farther, Carl said: "Got a lot on his mind, I guess."

O'Mara made a stab in the dark: "Tierney?"

"I dunno." Carl gazed stolidly at the macadam.

"I guess Tierney's making quite a bit of dough."

"Yeah." And Carl drove silently into North Dartmouth.

"Guess Tierney doesn't like splitting the dough with Madeira."

Carl said nothing.

"What do you think?"

Carl said nothing. Half a mile afterward, he did say, "What do you do in the daytime?"

"Sleep. Or run errands. How about you?"

"Got a truck of my own—just bought it. I like trucks," Carl said earnestly. "Going to get me a job hauling for the city daytimes."

"Good idea."

"City pays ten dollars for the truck, five dollars for the man. That's pretty—— I'll be a son of a bitch," Carl whispered.

O'Mara saw his knee move, heard the brakes howl, saw the light truck ahead turned sideways in the middle of the road. He thought at once, *Accident.* Then, as Carl swung their truck desperately toward the gutter and the load shifted, the word leaped into his mind: *Hijackers.* . . . They had never been real. You read about them, saw the word, but it was like Comanches or Confederate veterans—they were some place but not here. Here they were. . . . Their truck leaned on two wheels, righted, was back on the road.

The other truck was after them at once. It drew up beside them, edged towards them, fell back. A hill was coming; the other truck gained. "Carl," O'Mara yelled, "the curve——"

The heavy truck shook as though it were trying to tip over. Carl brought it to a shuddering, staggering stop. Brakes whined on the other truck and a voice said, "All right, get down. Stand over there."

The man had a gun, O'Mara saw. It looked like a 12-gauge shotgun.

Two others came from the other truck and began lifting out the cases. A black coupe went past without stopping. The men grunted, as they lifted the liquor into their own truck. It seemed only a minute before the man with the shotgun climbed silently in with the others. They disappeared down the road toward Westport.

O'Mara swore. They would have to go back now, get Cap'n Winkler out of bed, and tell him. Cap'n Winkler would not be pleased.

Carl walked dumbly around the truck. He stopped beside the left front wheel. That tire was flat, O'Mara saw, and the other truck must have crushed the fender.

Carl sank down onto the running board; sat gazing at the wheel. Abruptly, softly, Carl began to weep.

4

"Say what you like about Tierney," the Old Man said, "he's a good friend of the workingman."

"He's a better friend of himself."

"Ah, well, maybe he does graft a little, as which of them doesn't? But he's not one to keep it all for himself."

"You bet he isn't."

The Old Man pointed his pipe at O'Mara. "If a poor workingman needs a job, who will help him sooner than Jim Tierney? And many a time I've seen him reach down into his pocket to tide some poor devil over, and no one the wiser for it."

"His *own* pocket?"

"You're speaking against a fine man," the Old Man said angrily. "A fine man and a fine Catholic. Receives every Sunday of his life, Jim Tierney does, and would to God I could say the same for yourself."

O'Mara shrugged. "I'm not saying he's any worse than anyone else."

"And I'm saying he's better." The Old Man dragged on his pipe. "Ah, yes, many's the time I've seen Jim Tierney on a cold winter's day, riding a load of coal with the driver. And the people along the street saying, 'There goes Jim Tierney with a load of coal for the poor widows of the South End.' "

"Jeez, Pa, he probably drove the same load of coal around the North End and the West End too."

The Old Man grinned. "Well, I've heard that, too. Oh, he's a shrewd one, Tierney—and him with nothing but a grammar school education, don't forget. May you do half as well with all the schooling you've had."

"Well——"

"Why don't you come down, then, and hear him speak at the K. of C. tomorrow? You've never heard him, now have you?"

"No."

"Come down, then."

"Well——"

"He came to see your poor mother at her wake, don't forget."

"Oh, for God's sake," said O'Mara.

5

Jim Tierney was a strong man, and his voice was strong. He raised or lowered it as he wished. He made it roar:

"Remember—no man is going to starve! As long as there's a penny in the treasury or a nickel's worth of credit, no man will starve! No man is going to go about the streets and say, 'Jim Tierney let me hunger, Jim Tierney let my children die.' No! That man is going to work, his wife and little children are going to eat, as long as Jim Tierney is mayor."

His voice softened abruptly, he bent toward his audience: "Then when I'm through, and they come to me and say, 'Jim Tierney, did you make any mistakes?' I'm going to say, 'Yes, I'm only human. I made mistakes. Sure. . . .' "

He yelled furiously: "But when they say, 'Tierney, did you turn your back on the people you came from?' I'll answer, 'No! I never forgot them. No matter what it cost me, I never let them down.' "

His voice softened, and was quick and sad and confidential, as though making a confession: "I never forgot my own father and mother, God rest their souls—good, honest, hard-working people, nor what my old mother said to me before she died: 'Jim,' she said, 'you're a poor boy, but you've had a good Christian upbringing. You come of good stock. Don't ever be ashamed of your own kind.' And I never have. . . . I know what it means to be out of work." He yelled: "I know what it means to be hungry!"

His big face was red, but his voice changed, became brisk and businesslike. "Of course, some people—who put property values before human values—are saying, 'Oh, but look what it costs us to give those men a job. Look at the roads you're repairing—there's no need for that. Those sidewalks—they can wait.' "

He frowned. "Any fair and impartial estimate of the actual situation which prevails—considering original cost, maintenance and long-term value to the city—will show that such people are mistaken. Entirely aside from the men employed, these projects are highly desirable. We're getting a good job done, at a reasonable investment. And when this thing is over, we'll have something to show for it—permanent construction of lasting value." He nodded impressively. "That's just good sound business practice—that's all that is."

He smiled. "I want to thank you for asking me to address this splendid organization today. . . ."

The Old Man said, "Ain't you going to go up and shake hands with the Mayor?"

"Well—if it doesn't take too long," O'Mara said. "I've got to see someone—may have to work. . . ."

He found Carl behind the furniture store, peering into the truck's engine.

"Am I supposed to help you tonight?"

Carl looked even gloomier than ever. "Naw. Madeira says go alone."

"Big load?"

Carl nodded.

O'Mara said, "How's your own truck?"

"Oh," Carl said.

"Did you get the city job?"

Carl looked up from the engine. His face was bleak with indignation.

"Those dirty bastards," Carl said. "You know what? Before you get the job, you got to kick in. Then afterwards, you kick back on what you get."

"Who to?"

"Guy named Pete. Bagman. Tierney gets it. . . . The bastards," Carl said indignantly. "They won't even tell you how much. Just keep kicking in, that's all, or you won't get to haul."

His tone was outraged. "Why, the crooks!" he said. "And you know that stuff they spray on the roads? They say a company sells that. They got to kick in too. Imagine," Carl said, "my own truck, and before I even start the job——"

It seemed it might be impossible to get Carl ever to stop talking about it.

6

Cap'n Winkler yelled, "You know what happened to Carl?"

Madeira said, "Yes, we know."

"Was he hurt?"

"No," Madeira said. "They bent an axle when they pushed him off the road, but Carl wasn't hurt."

"Leaping Jesus, that makes twice."

Cap'n Winkler's face was always red, he always blasphemed, and it was hard to tell when he was really upset and when he wasn't. Madeira couldn't tell—that was plain. "You shouldn't be always coming here."

"Pee on that," Cap'n Winkler snarled. "That makes twice. Once from Carl and Steve here, once from Carl alone. How? By who?"

"By *whom*, Captain."

"And I'll tell you something else: If the revenuers ever do catch up with us, you'll be covered and out in the clear——"

"Both at the same time, Captain?"

"Don't get gay with me! We don't go every night—how in holy Christ do *they* know when we're going?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I don't hardly mean nothing by it," Cap'n Winkler said. "Correct that one, barrister." He walked past O'Mara, through the outer office, past the redhead, out the door. They heard him clearing his throat, and knew he was about to spit. There were no spittoons out there.

O'Mara said, "He sure is griped today."

Madeira didn't look up from his desk. "I'm going to be busy."

"Oh. O. K."

Madeira looked up. "We're all pretty busy these days. Don't let it get you down. You'll be better off if you don't."

"O. K."

"I'm telling her to put you down for five bucks more a week."

"Swell!" He walked past the redhead on light and bounc-

ing feet. Five bucks! It made fifty dollars a week he was getting now. Fifty bucks——

The redhead was coming after him. "Steve——"

He thought she wanted to date him up, but her face was strained and earnest. She looked a hundred years old.

"Steve, he's trying to tell you something. Stay on his side. If there's a break, don't go over to Winkler. Steve, don't ever——"

He patted her gently beneath her left breast. "Don't worry, Fat."

"No, I mean it. He can be an awfully ugly man. Don't go against him, ever."

"Don't worry. . . . Red, I'm thinking of something."

"What?"

"Do you think a girl would marry me?"

She was looking at him, hard.

"What do you think? Me, with my handsome puss and fifty bucks a week?"

She was still staring at him.

"You son of a bitch," she said. "If you ever married a girl, there's only one reason why you'd do it."

O'Mara began to laugh.

CAROLINE · FALL

1

EVALYN SAID, "The morning paper, Mrs. Standler."

"Oh, thank you."

Caroline smiled up at her. *Such a striking, such a downright pretty girl, and not dark at all really. If I were John or Mark, I'd be tempted. . . .* John and Mark were busy with their eggs and seemed not even to notice Evalyn.

The thought, of course, had been merely mischievous and she knew they never would. That would be such a terrific scandal.

"Mark," she said, "are you busy tonight?"

"No, why?"

"I thought you might drive me to the Whalers Club. My committee is doing some work on the election."

"Be glad to."

"Oh, fine." *Oh, very fine. For if he weren't seeing that Polish girl tonight—the first time he'd been home in weeks—obviously he wasn't seeing her at all these days.* She had gathered as much, though she had never asked. . . .

John said, "What's this about the election?"

"Why, you know our Civic Education Committee. We're making a non-partisan study of the campaign issues—different members give little reports, then afterward we have a question period and general debate." She didn't feel like talking about that. She looked at Mark and thought: *I really*

must have the Brimmers down, let him and Faith have some time together, and see whether he's outgrown his dislike of her. His lack of interest, really, since Mark never seems to dislike anyone. He's so good-natured—that's his trouble. . . .

John said, "Anybody debate?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said, does anyone care to debate?"

"Oh, just Ethel Lassiter. She says we shouldn't be studying the election at all. You know how Ethel is."

"Hm—some kind of relative of the Howes, isn't she? The Howes know the Roosevelts pretty well. What does Ethel want to do?"

"Local politics. She says if we studied up on what Mayor Tierney and his gang are doing, we might get more out of it. As though we didn't know enough to discuss the really interesting questions——"

She was thinking: *But if this with the Polish girl is just some trivial quarrel over some trivial thing, it may be settled as easily as it started—and soon. Soon. And then it'll be too late. . . .*

John was saying, "Not a bad man at all. Doesn't do a thing to upset business, in spite of all his wild talk. No, he's no worse than any of them, Tierney isn't."

"Of course not. . . . Mark?"

"Yes?"

"Suppose your father and I come up to Boston next weekend."

"Good. I'll take you out."

"We might bring some friends along——"

"O. K."

O. K. She smiled at him. "Finish your breakfast now, dear —we've all got things to do." She picked up the newspaper, folded it carefully, and with a grave face began reading what Mr. Hoover had said at Indianapolis.

That was quite a day. At the very beginning, after breakfast, Evalyn had said: "Mrs. Standler, may I speak to you a moment?"

The girl's face loked somehow darker than ever and her mouth was tight.

"I just wanted to tell you—Mrs. Standler, Saturday is my last day here."

It was a blow in the face. "But why, Evalyn? What have we done? . . ." *It wasn't any use.*

"If it's more money—after all, you know how times are. And with jobs so hard to get——"

The girl just kept shaking her head, her brown eyes wide, her nostrils drawn in a little and her voice, as ever, clear: "Please, Mrs. Standler, please don't ask me why."

No use. . . . Afterwards, sitting at her desk—she was supposed to be preparing a paper on the election—Caroline jotted down figures. *Eight dollars a week. Assume she works fifty weeks a year. Four hundred dollars—exactly the sum of Mark's tuition.*

She felt a little better. She could tell John about it. And when the mail came, there was a letter from Mark.

Mark wrote politely of the dinner and theater he'd been to with his parents and Faith Brimmer. Afterward Faith had invited him to a Junior League dance. He had had a good time, he said. He had asked her to a dance at Harvard.

Caroline smiled. *Ah, if one could only read between the lines!*

It was hard after that to concentrate on her essay. *Time,* she thought, *that is all these little affairs need. Time cures all things.* . . . She hadn't expected it would be so difficult to get the words of her essay just right.

When John came home, she said, "Dear, how does this

sound?—Mr. Hoover has said what will happen if the Democrats win, in words we all would use if we were capable of expressing it so well. 'The grass will grow up in streets of a hundred cities, a thousand towns; the weeds will overrun the fields of millions of farms. . . . Their churches and schoolhouses will decay——"

"Hey," John said, "I thought these meetings were supposed to be non-partisan."

"Oh, not any more. How can they be, when no one ever says anything against Mr. Hoover? Except Ethel Lassiter, and she doesn't really *say* anything."

"I bet not."

"Of course, Ethel hasn't been there the last two meetings. Probably that's because she doesn't want to hear any more reports favoring Mr. Hoover. I think that rather narrow-minded of Ethel."

John shook his head. "Say what you like, this isn't a very good year for the Republicans."

"I must say you've been rather defeatist from the beginning."

"Why not? After all, Caroline, there *are* millions of people out of work, businesses failing. That won't help Hoover."

Caroline looked up angrily from her desk. "It certainly isn't *his* fault! *He* didn't start the depression. And he's done everything he could—everything that isn't un-American—to stop it."

"That's not the point. People will think it's his fault, whether it is or not. No, a bad year for Republicans."

"Is that why you didn't run, John?"

"Yes—that and the bank."

It frightened her a little, to see him so glum. She said cheerfully, "Why, surely you're not worried about the bank, after all it's been through, all these years——"

John shrugged, reaching for his pipe. *She must tell him,*

later, that he was smoking too *much*. "A bank's just a business too. If merchants can't pay back their loans, if our securities go down, if we can't sell our foreclosures for what they're mortgaged——" He threw a match at the fireplace. "Don't tell anyone I told you, but one or two banks have failed already."

"Oh, I know *that*," Caroline said. "John, you're making fun of me, and that isn't——" Then she heard Evalyn in the kitchen, and she said, "Come here, John."

"Yes?"

She said softly, "Evalyn's getting through. She told me this morning."

John didn't seem too upset. "Well——"

"After all these years—— I almost cried when I heard it."

"Perhaps it's for the best."

"Why, yes, dear, in a way it's a relief. I can have Mrs. Leary from down the street come in on two days a week and help with the cleaning and ironing. That's really all the help I need."

"Fine."

"And just think, at two dollars a day that would be only four dollars. Four from eight leaves four, times fifty—there's two hundred dollars saved, right there. Really, I feel almost proud of myself."

"Good."

"But you know, John, I never would have asked her to leave myself. Never."

"Yes," John said, "I know that."

Later, after dinner, she made a point of helping Evalyn in the kitchen. She said nothing, but Evalyn must have seen how hurt she looked. Just before they finished, she said, "Evalyn, if there's anything, anything at all, I can do——"

Evalyn turned to her quickly. Tears were in the corners

of the girl's deep brown eyes. "Mrs. Standler, I just can't leave without telling you."

"Oh, I knew you couldn't."

"Please sit down, Mrs. Standler."

They sat side by side in the breakfast nook, and Evalyn said: "Promise you won't tell anyone I told you—anyone."

"I promise."

She said softly, "It was Mr. Standler who told me I must go."

"Evalyn!"

She put her finger to her lips. "Please, Mrs. Standler. He said he wasn't sure how much longer you could afford to have me. And he thought it might be better if I went before too many other people were looking for jobs too."

"Have you found a job, Evalyn?"

"No, not yet. But I couldn't go without your knowing why."

She thought at once of her mother. *Mother, I'm so sorry.* . . . "I didn't know, Evalyn," she said. "Believe me, I didn't."

"It's all right, Mrs. Standler."

"I never, never knew."

She couldn't finish the essay. She sat on her desk and stared at the paper. *I didn't know how worried he was, I never knew it was that bad.* . . . She said, as casually as possible, "John, suppose the bank needed help, couldn't it get it?"

John was puffing on his pipe. "Where?"

"Well—what's this R. F. C. I hear about?"

"Not much help there, I'm afraid. That's a government outfit, Caroline—very rigid standards, minute examination. Oceans of red tape. You know what the government is like."

"Oh."

"Don't worry about it."

She frowned, without letting him see her frown. "How about some other bank? Some great big strong bank with all kinds of resources? Couldn't it help?"

"If there is one, and if it had any reason to." He shook his head. "Banking houses aren't charitable institutions—and most of them are in the same boat these days. Just trying to ride out the storm."

"I see."

"Don't worry. We'll ride it out."

"I see." She wasn't listening any more. "Oh, yes," she said.

3

Afterwards she almost laughed, remembering how easy it was. She had said, "John, I'm going to spend the day in Boston."

"Little shopping?"

"Mrs. Leary will be in to get your dinner."

"O. K."

She knew he only half heard her, he was so pre-occupied. His nervousness seemed to increase with every day, and it made her nearly weep to see him.

Going up on the train, she read in the newspaper that in Pennsylvania sixteen banks had failed in the previous week alone.

Mrs. Brimmer said, "I'm delighted you came."

She truly seemed to be. Caroline knew their talk would not degenerate into one of those earnest-mothers-discuss-sons-and-daughters sessions. Still, she could see she stood on a higher level now with Mrs. Brimmer.

"We've seen quite a bit of Mark."

Caroline said lightly, "I hope he hasn't been a bore."

"Not at all. We like him." She smiled candidly. "Faith likes him too."

It seemed so obvious to reply, And I just adore Faith. Caroline said, "I'm glad."

"I honestly believe he's different from a good many other young men, these days."

"Less frivolous, perhaps?"

"Exactly."

"He's been through such a lot."

"Yes, I know."

"He comes of good stock. I can say that," Caroline said, smiling, "because it's his father's family I'm referring to."

"Your husband's people have lived there a long time, haven't they?—ever since whaling days."

"First the whaling, then the mills and the bank. The bank's the main thing these days."

"I see."

"I might almost say, the chief worry."

"Oh?"

Caroline stirred her tea. She didn't think the light, almost indifferent tone of her voice changed. "It's really too bad—it's been in the family so long, handed down from John's father to John. And then, of course, Mark."

"I understand."

"As John says, it's an old, sound ship, and if it could only weather this storm—— He's really quite worried."

Mrs. Brimmer seemed to look at her directly. "Of course, I never have anything to say in my husband's business affairs."

"Oh, nor do I—I don't understand what John's talking about half the time. When I do, it's often quite boring."

She smiled at Mrs. Brimmer. *How much of the noted Mr. Brimmer's brains were really in this frail, silver-topped head? It was quite often that way in Boston families, one heard, but no one really knew.*

"It's been so nice of you. . . ."

What a long week that was! But she knew at once the day it happened, for John came home, grinning, and bounced around the house like a schoolboy. He even started whistling *Moonlight on the Ganges,* which always drove her mad.

The infuriating thing was that he apparently wasn't going to tell her a thing. He said, "How's the election?"

"All right."

"Finish your paper?"

"Not yet."

"That's quite a sign in the club."

"Isn't it! Lucy Whipple tacked it up." The sign originally said: ONLY TWELVE DAYS LEFT TO SAVE AMERICA. Each morning, promptly at nine, Lucy went down to the club and changed the sign, making it read one day less.

For goodness sake, was that all he was going to say?

"You know—the damnedest thing happened——"

Eagerly: "What, John?"

"Well, I thought I might mention it, since we were talking about it before. Jay Brimmer called up——"

She swung back to her desk, so he couldn't see her face. "Yes?"

"Talked damned near an hour. You know what he said? Offered to back up the bank in case we needed it!"

She couldn't speak for a moment. She managed to say, "That's good, John."

"Good, hell—it's glorious! With a man like that behind us——" She could feel his eyes studying her. "Say, you didn't have anything to do with this, did you?"

"John! You know I wouldn't even know how to explain it! But I think it's awfully nice."

"Of course, Brimmer probably expects to get a piece of control out of it—he's always doing that—but what in hell do we care? As long——"

"Please don't swear, John. . . ." She knew he was stand-

ing there, thinking about it, and she would have liked to see his face, see the worry gone. But when she turned around he was half walking, half leaping, toward the stairs.

"See you later, kid."

She smiled at her paper. She thought she might weep. *Oh, she could finish it now! Lucy Whipple had been cross with her, but now she would make this the best essay in the club.*

She bent her head. Her pen scratched resolutely across the paper.

For now there were only five days left in which to save America.

4

Wasn't it just her luck, to be ill on election day! Now she would do well to make the victory celebration tonight in the Whalers Club. She would have to rest all day, and might be even unable to vote.

She was glum, like an old soldier kept out of battle at the last moment. The *Herald* editorial page made her feel a little better. There was a huge portrait of Mr. Hoover, with the caption, UPHOLD THE MAN OF THE HOUR, and six or seven splendid editorials, all suggesting how disastrous it would be if Roosevelt and Garner won.

But what impressed Caroline most were three letters submitted by readers. All were for Hoover, not one for Roosevelt! That showed the way the tide was running, and perhaps Mr. Hoover wouldn't need her vote after all.

But Mrs. Leary was annoying, when she came waddling in to do the housework. "Would you mind if I ran downtown first, Mrs. Standler—the election, you know."

"Oh." Mrs. Leary had been acting rather uppity lately, and it was clear who her candidate was. "Of course, you've really got all day."

"Sure. But by the Old Harry, I'm getting my vote in *early*." She flounced out, a gross and ignorant person, and it was downright startling to realize that her vote would count every bit as much as Caroline's or Lucy Whipple's. In fact, if Caroline didn't vote at all——

She set her chin firmly. She struggled into her clothes, called a taxi. She felt a little weak, standing in line at the polls. *Heavens, she had never seen such a crowd—Portuguese and French and all kinds of people, waiting, patient, expressionless. How many of them would vote for Hoover, who knew?* But she went through with it.

Home again, she slipped into her housecoat. She nearly giggled when Mrs. Leary came back at last and found her sitting there as before. Mrs. Leary looked as though she'd just annihilated ten thousand of her enemies.

At noon the radio announcer said, "Here are the first results in the great presidential race." It seemed there were a number of little towns where everyone got up early and voted, so that their town would be first to report. "Ashford, complete vote: Hoover, 24; Roosevelt, 8." Caroline shot a triumphant look at Mrs. Leary. "Peru, complete vote: Hoover, 37; Roosevelt, 23. That gives a total of 61 to 31, or almost exactly 2 to 1 for Hoover."

Mrs. Leary's hand trembled as she served the soup. Caroline looked up at her amusedly.

"Them whistle stops," scoffed Mrs. Leary. "When the big cities come in——"

"Oh, I don't know," Caroline said. "I think people in cities are just as intelligent as people in the small towns, don't you?" Mrs. Leary made a noise with her mouth. Caroline felt so much better she went upstairs and got dressed again.

She wished John, or Mark, were home, the house was so dull. John had said something about a bank examiner coming and would be busy all day. Mark, of course, was at college—

she did hope he saw Faith Brimmer only week-ends; his last year, and he really did need to study. Alec Marwick said he was a good, conscientious student, but there were so many temptations. . . . The afternoon news broadcaster said: "Here is the running total for 18 towns. Hoover, 5237; Roosevelt, 2812." Contentedly, Caroline fell asleep on the sofa. When she awoke, Mrs. Leary was already preparing dinner.

"Is himself going to be on time?"

Caroline smiled. *Himself!* "I expect so."

John looked quite tired when he came home, but Caroline could see his work was finished and his worry gone. "How's the election?"

"Oh, just fine." All during dinner the returns grew more and more exciting. She could hear the difference in the announcers' voices—the sense that the decision was drawing nearer. Behind the voices was the urgent, hurried clatter of the news machines. Mr. Hoover was still far ahead in the towns. Here also was a partial return from Boston where, of course, the Democrats were leading. And that was just as Mother observed, even in her day. Caroline remembered: *The Irish were ruining Boston—moving into the best neighborhoods, running the politics.* . . . She said nothing of this to Mrs. Leary.

Mrs. Leary went home, slamming the door behind her.

Caroline said, "I wonder what time would be best to go to the Whalers Club."

"Whalers Club? What for?"

"We're going to have a victory celebration. Lucy Whipple says it'll be a wonderful time."

"If I were you," John said, "I'd wait."

"Well, really, you don't think there's any *doubt* about it, do you? After all, people have *some* intelligence."

She went back to the radio, which she had not really

listened to since dinner. Now it was saying, ". . . the latest summary on the presidential election. Late reports indicate the Democratic ticket will carry New York state. Many upstate cities, ordinarily Republican, are swinging towards Roosevelt——"

Was that news? His own state, wasn't it?

"Surprising as it may seem, the key state of Ohio is also going Democratic. In Cleveland——"

Oh, ridiculous. She would have to get another announcer, this one wasn't getting anything straight.

"Latest returns from New Hampshire——"

John was tapping out his pipe.

"In New Hampshire, Hoover is far ahead."

That was more like it. . . . John said, "Guess I'll start for bed."

"So soon? All right, dear, you go right ahead. Don't worry about Mr. Hoover, he'll be all right." She turned back to the dial.

"*Happy days are here again——*"

Silly song.

". . . special bulletin. The New York *Herald Tribune* has just conceded the election to Roosevelt."

Oh, phooey. She'd turn the thing on later; snapped it off. Only then was she aware that the doorbell was ringing.

The little boy handed her the yellow envelope and disappeared into the night. If this were about the election, she hoped it was more reliable——

"John!"

She heard him running in the upper hall, saw his startled face above the rail. She must have screamed very loudly. She took in a deep, deep breath.

"John! Alec's run off with Faith Brimmer!"

ALEC · FALL

THEY STOPPED the first night at a tourist home just beyond Great Barrington. Alec spent a preposterous moment wondering what he should sign in the register: Mr. Alec Marwick and wife? Mr. Alec Marwick and concubine? Mr. and Mrs. J. Mervyn Whistlebottom? Mr. Marwick and nymphomaniac?

It turned out there wasn't any register. A tall and sleepy woman merely showed them a room, collected two dollars, and went away.

Faith laughed at him. She had turned her body toward him, away from the mirror. Her hands were in her hair. "You're so jittery! Haven't you done this kind of thing before?"

"Well—not exactly like this."

"You'll learn, darling."

Her eyes seemed white and half-closed with desire. Alec thought desperately, *Better get another drink.* He could see there wasn't time. Slowly, her eyes still fixed on him, Faith began unbuttoning her dress.

2

One night he had seen her coming out of the Copley Plaza with Mark Standler. She was close to him, clasping his arm. She looked so contented she was almost pretty. Alec thought he heard a note of triumph in her voice.

He began putting things together, like a detective, though it was none of his business. When he talked with Mark afterward, he mentioned Felicia Zielinski. Courteously, abruptly, Mark changed the subject.

He met Faith next at a party in Cambridge. She came in with a broad-shouldered, dark young man, and was already slightly drunk. She said, "How d'you like my new muscle man?"

"Someone special?"

"Just part of my recreational program, before I settle down."

"You're thinking of that?"

"Every girl thinks of it, Alec," she said, "even me."

"Well, he's all right."

She looked at him closely. "Could it ever be possible you're jealous?"

"It could."

She looked at him closely again, and he wondered if she suspected—— He said, "Let's have another drink."

"No, Alec. Eventually I must go home."

She has a mind, a shrewdness, he was thinking, *and that may make it hard. All I want is to find out something, but it may not be easy.* "You look all right."

"That's almost a compliment."

"You've got me wrong," he said. "In the end I always wake up."

"Are you awake now, Alec?"

"I wish you'd stop beating around the mulberry bush," she said, "because my muscle man is looking for me, and his eyes are full of lust."

"How about Wednesday?"

"Thursday. My folks will be away—I can stay as long as you want."

He would remember that, later. "Thursday. . . ."

She was wearing a simple blue dress and her mouth was prim. She looked like a fine young woman en route to a matinee or the art museum. She said, "This is quite a joint."

Alec glanced around the speakeasy. "It's all right. Where I came from, there'd be gaming tables too."

"Nevada? I've always been dying to see the West."

Later, she said, "Mark doesn't take me to such places often."

He tried to sound uninterested. "No?"

"Quite possibly he thinks they shock me."

"You've seen a lot of Mark."

"Alec! Is that your jealousy again?"

He shrugged. She had the conceit every voluptuous woman had—the confidence in her own powers. He could count on that.

She said, "He's such a dear boy, though rather dull. Do you think a man could hold out against me forever?"

"Not the Stone Image himself."

"Hi, Stone Image."

He shook his head. . . . He could see quite clearly what the situation was, and what precisely he might do about it—what it would mean, what it would cost. . . . He had always been so good at that.

She said, "It'll be amusing to see how long it'll take—how many methods."

"Sure."

"So if you're really jealous, Alec—you'd better get busy. It might be a little harder, *afterward*."

He managed a smile. He had never been able to decide, never able to act. . . . "Look," he said, "how about some air? I feel like moving."

"Wonderful."

He put his hand on her arm as she rose; kept it there. Her

flesh was warm. She leaned toward him in a quick, instinctive motion. "Dear Alec."

"I've another bottle out in the car."

"Dear Alec," she said, "I'll be so sorry to lose you, afterward."

3

He was really glad Ted Brewster was there, leaning in the doorway. It hadn't occurred to him that Ted might be around at this hour.

"Doc," Ted Brewster said, "what the hell?"

Alec looked up from his bag. "I'm going out West," he said. "I always wanted to go out West, and tonight would be just ducky."

Thoughtfully, Ted Brewster reached up and rubbed his bald spot.

Alec said, "How lovely it will be, all across the country. And I'll leave them a note, and no one will ever know. My friend in Washington always sends them a wire, didn't you know? And when I'm tired of the West and Westerners we can start back, and all across the country——"

"Doc, you're drunk."

"Just a little. Just enough. . . . I knew a guy named Webb Carlson once," Alec said. "A good, honest guy——"

"Doc." Ted was still staring at him. "If you do go, I can cover your classes. My hours——"

"All right. Just for a week, every other day. After a week I can let them know."

"You're coming back, of course."

Alec yanked at the straps of his bag.

"Alec," Brewster said, "are you sure you know what you're doing?"

Alec straightened up. The bag was in his hand. "You're

damned right I know." His voice was completely sober. "For the first time in my life, I'm doing a brave and decent thing."

He went out, down the stairs. The Yard was bright beneath a cold and orange moon. Two youths passed without speaking to him. He walked through the Johnston Gate into the Square, where his car was.

4

After the night in Great Barrington, they set out in the morning for Rochester. Faith said the New York farmlands were very nice, and almost as pretty as New England.

"How far West have you been?"

"Winchester, Va."

"I envy you what you have to see."

"I know I'll just love it, dear, with you."

Alec said:

> "But each man and woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
> My left hand hooking you round the waist,
> My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents
> and the public road.

That's a gem from Whitman, though for automobile drivers he's got it backward."

"Oh, I learned one from him too. But mine is better:

> Behold I do not give lectures or a little charity,
> When I give, I give myself."

Alec wondered if he might get to like her, after a while, and unreasonably hoped he wouldn't. "How about your folks?"

"They may suspect, they may fume a little, but they won't make a scene. They never care for scenes."

In Rochester, that night and in the morning, there was plenty of time. Faith was reluctant to get out of bed, and Alec was tired already.

They took the lake steamer to Buffalo. Faith called it the funniest old tub she was ever on; compared it endlessly with ocean liners; laughed in the waiter's face at dinner. "But Alec, he's so stupid!" When night came she forgot her complaints.

They went on, after the steamer docked at Detroit in the morning, and reached Chicago by night. They were two days in Chicago. Faith liked the city—there were so many places to go. Alec asked—unfortunately she was drunk when he asked it—"Still want to go on?"

"Why, Walt Whitman my darling, of course I do."

That was the day he sent the telegram.

It was a long and tiresome ride, across Illinois into Iowa. Alec tried to tell her this land was rich and beautiful in summer, but Faith wouldn't listen. "Alec, it's so *drear!*" After the night in Ames, she thought their road duller than ever.

They crossed the Missouri into Nebraska. Faith shivered, as the wind shoved at Alec's car.

"Is it always so ghastly cold?"

"No," Alec said. "This is the prairie. In the summer, it's an oven."

"My God!"

In Grand Island, with the great dome of the sky over them from horizon to horizon and the wind yelling, she said, "Is this the Nebraska I've heard you praise?"

"I know some people in this town. They're darned proud of it."

"You mean anyone *wants* to live here?"

Alec had thought the tourist court on the highway might be better than a hotel, but Faith was not impressed. It did

sound at times as though the trucks were coming right into their room and the carpet was a trifle worn. Faith said, "Aren't we sinking a little low?"

"We'll have to put up with less than this, farther on."

She undressed in a grim silence. For the first time on the trip she made no effort to get him into her bed.

The highway west of Grand Island was lonelier, the scenery more desolate, the air colder as they climbed towards the Wyoming plateau. Going through Kearney, Alec had said, "This is half way."

"Across the country? Is that all? How far are the mountains?"

"Few hundred miles."

"Oh, Lord."

"This is quite a road. This is the way the Mormons came, and the Oregon Trail, the Pony Express, and there's the Union Pacific."

She didn't look. "They can have it, and I'll take the B. & A."

Beyond Ogallala a tire blew out. While Alec was removing it, there was darkness suddenly. The duststorm raged through the car before Faith could get the windows shut. Her dress was heavy with dirt. She dug indignantly at her stricken eyes. . . .

In Cheyenne, in the hotel, she said, "Alec, let's call it quits."

He tried to sound surprised. "All right."

"I'd like to start back tomorrow."

"I was just wondering who had failed—me or America."

She shook her head, as she looked wearily into the mirror. "No hard feelings, Alec, please. If it's over it's over."

"All right. But don't you think you ought to wait a while, till things cool off at home?"

"Why? No one knows. My folks——"

She turned on him quickly. "Alec: *you* didn't tell anyone."

"Well——"

"*Alec: who?*"

"Well, Ted Brewster knows I went. And I believe Caroline Standler knows you're with me."

She was giving an imitation of Lon Chaney and her voice was as terrible as her eyes: "*Caroline Standler!* Alec! You knew what I intended——"

"Naturally, I thought that was all off when——"

"You dirty little—— You *didn't!* You *knew!* Oh, you filthy—you obscene——" Her voice was a scream now, and her hand scrambled frantically on the dresser top behind her. Alec began to duck.

5

The old car ran up and down the mountains like an animal unburdened and set free. Alec had stopped at Laramie to send a wire to Harvard. He'd had a mental breakdown, the wire said (Ted Brewster could vouch for that), and it was not possible for him to come back.

He grinned up contentedly at the bright colors of the hills. He knew now what his goal was—believed he must have known it from the beginning.

Faith hadn't lingered. She refused to speak to him after her fury was spent (there was a small patch of adhesive tape on his forehead, where his metal-backed hairbrush had struck); refused to take money, and raged down to the U.P. station to catch the first train East. By this time, probably, she was almost home.

Alec smiled, thinking of home, but not of Boston. He was thinking of the old whaling city and the girl with the Polish

name. He thought he was riding into, not out of, her life, though he was driving through the mountains and the sun was in his face.

6

He felt next door to his goal, the moment he saw the low purple mountains beside the valley of the Humboldt. He regretted every minute his car took getting across the basin, regretted the few hours he spent asleep in Winnemucca. He was up before dawn, and off across the desert. He saw people driving with tense, apprehensive faces—what if a tire blew? will my radiator boil?—but he was whistling as he went. The old car would never fail him now, he knew.

He was in Sparks at ten, and in Reno by quarter past.

It was childish to go anywhere before he washed up—he hadn't shaved since yesterday. He couldn't help it. He swung off the highway at Virginia Street, and drove whistling through the city.

He hadn't thought he could ever lose Plantation Street. He took a few wrong corners before he found it; drove slowly past the houses. And there was the house.

As soon as he saw it, he knew there was no point in going farther.

Still, he walked up and rang the bell—saw by looking in the windows that no one had lived there for months.

He went back along the weed-spotted walk to his car. The gasoline man on the corner frowned, as he automatically wiped the windshield.

"Lazarus? The big house? What was she like?"

"Black hair. Not very tall."

"Sort of pretty?"

Alec said, "She was a very pretty girl."

"Oh, Christ, yes," the gas man said, as though reproaching

himself. "Saw her go by here often. Why, she ain't been here a long time."

"I know that."

The gas man leaned sociably against the car. "Yeah, the old man died. And she got married—must be about a year ago."

He might have said the sun was shining. "I see."

The man's voice rose, as though divulging an unusual and somewhat puzzling fact. "Married some damn Jew, they said."

"Well? She was Jewish herself."

The gas man stared. "Yeah, that's right—must have been. Lazarus. But Jeez, she didn't look it."

"You can't always tell," Alec said sombrely. He put the car into first; leaned deliberately toward the man. "For your information—I'm a Jew." He pushed his hand into the amazed, asinine face. The wheels dug into the gravel and the car shot out.

Reno was unendurable. He drove out of it on Virginia and West Fourth Streets much faster than he should. *So it's in the West now too,* he thought. *They were all men when the West cried for men but now some are just damned Jews.* He thought of the little cemetery back in Grand Island, where Catholics and Jews and Protestants were buried together. *They were all men, once, but now the West has changed.*

Maybe it's America that has changed.

He drove on, wearily, over the high Sierras. This road would take him to San Francisco. But he thought of that always as a city of happiness—he and Rachel had been happy there. He did not believe he wanted to go to San Francisco.

At Roseville, where Route 99 branched to the north, a bum was standing in the road. Alec wished he had counted the bums—boys and girls, old men, complete families—he had

seen along the way. With Faith he'd been unable to pick them up; by himself, he'd been too preoccupied. This bum waggled a finger. Alec stopped.

The bum strolled toward him. "Where you headed, bud?"

"Where are you headed?"

The bum said affably, "I'll tell you. I thought if anyone was going down into the Sacramento, I'd go. But if anyone was going toward Oregon, I'd rather go there."

"Why?"

"California don't care for vagrants."

"In that case," Alec said, "you and I had better head for Oregon. Get in, my friend."

The bum's trousers were dusty and his face had a dirty growth. *My God,* Alec thought, *he must look like me.*

The bum glanced with swift appraisal at the muddy car, the worn upholstery. "I seen a hundred jaloppies just like this, all headed West. You a little down on your luck, brother?"

"Brother," Alec said, "you might put it that way."

The bum nodded. He seemed willing to discuss misfortune at length, but Alec did not encourage him. He was thinking of Rachel and he thought:

Time is what love is lost by. Not big events or bitter words, but time. Time lying between two people when they should be together. Just time. Time and indecision, indecision and time. They can lose love for anyone, as they did for me. . . .

Beside him, the bum was snoring contentedly.

FELICIA · WINTER

I

MOTHER SAID, "Why is it you don't read to me about the election? You just look at that letter——"

"Please, Ma, I'm thinking." She pushed aside the paper with the headline, ROOSEVELT SWEEPS NATION, and stared at the back of the envelope. Mark Standler, Dunster 16-B. He had written since summer two other letters—one in September, one in October. But neither had so directly required an answer as this one did.

"You got it three days ago," Mother said, "and ever since—— I could learn to read it myself in that time."

Felicia shook her head absently and went into her bedroom. *It would have to be a good answer*, she thought, *one saying exactly what she meant.*

She read his letter just once more.

> . . . I think we were both a little hasty, or obstinate, or very young. All you said was that you couldn't marry me—now. So why couldn't we just go on as before? This not seeing each other is no good. . . .

She stared at her best stationery. *Make it right*, her mind repeated, *because it means so much.* "Dearest Mark——"

She threw that sheet away, leaned her chin on her hand and gazed out the window. "Mark, dear——"

She threw that away too. . . . In the narrow space she could see between her house and the next, Mr. Sikorski was

walking home. Mr. Sikorski had his hands in his pockets, and wore no overcoat, though the street was bleak with cold. Not many had gone past today, not even Uncle Anzelm on his usual stroll down past the quiet mill. . . . "Dear Mark——"

That looked a great deal better.

2

Nothing will be settled—nothing will be solved—by our going on the way we were. We still would come to the same old question, and my answer still would have to be the same. Or, if my answer was wrong, I will find it out this way, apart from you, sooner than any other way. . . .

Believe me, I would be happier seeing you. By not seeing you, perhaps our problem will be solved. If we belong together, we will realize it soon enough. Or perhaps (as I once thought) it was all a mistake from the beginning. If so, we will realize that too. Our love, if it is love, can stand the test of time.

I may be wrong. I think not. Oh, Mark, I hope not. . . .

3

From the very beginning Mr. Sikorski had been queer. Felicia couldn't understand him. Still, if she hadn't been so annoyed that night by Steve O'Mara, she might have guessed——

Mr. Sikorski said—standing in Mother's pantry, munching a *pieroga*—"You know about Anzelm's going?"

"Yes. I can't say, honestly, I'm surprised."

Mr. Sikorski nodded sadly. "First he visits our cousin in Dorchester, and then he goes back to the old country."

"Oh, I'm so sorry—for him, and for you. Because if he didn't——"

"We could keep the passage money. But a promise is a promise. And you must promise too."

"I?"

"Promise you won't tell him about me."

"Tell him what, Mr. Sikorski?"

"Ah, you know," Mr. Sikorski murmured into the *pieroga.* "If I talk about it, someone else may hear, and tell——"

And then there was Cecile, panting a little, and looking indignantly into the pantry.

"Felicia, I'm getting sick of this. O'Mara was on the phone again, and insisted——"

"Cecile, what did you tell him?"

"I told him the only possible time to see you was at six-thirty in the morning, because that's when you go downtown."

"You shouldn't have told him anything. But I never go till seven-thirty, don't you know?"

"You bet I know. . . ." *That O'Mara!* Felicia turned back to Mr. Sikorski, who was munching moodily on his *pieroga.*

"Mr. Sikorski, what on earth?"

But Mr. Sikorski said over her shoulder, "Hello, brother Anzelm. . . . Don't tell him," he whispered, "please."

Uncle Anzelm left in the morning, before it was scarcely light. He said his farewells in Sikorski's kitchen; shook hands with each neighbor in turn. To Cecile he said, "I think you are the most ladylike of all." To Joan, "I am sorry not to dance at your wedding." To Felicia, "I should have known you better."

Outside a horn was blowing, and Uncle Anzelm straightened up. That was the taxi, which would take him to the train, which would take him to Boston, where the boat would take him back to Poland.

Uncle Anzelm kissed his brother and sister-in-law, shook hands with everyone again, and walked out. He was a funny

little man in high shoes, and with a piece of egg on his chin.

Mrs. Sikorski sat down weakly at the table. Her eyes were so wet Felicia thought she was going to weep, but she didn't weep. She said simply, "I have seen so many come. I never saw one go before."

Mr. Sikorski sat with a thud beside her. "Get me a drink," he said, and that was surprising, for Mr. Sikorski seldom drank in the morning. "I'm glad no one told him how I lost my job."

"Mr. Sikorski, I never knew!"

"Oh, Felicia, I thought you or your mother would surely know. A week ago, I lost it." He said passionately, "We couldn't tell him. I said I was on a winter vacation. We couldn't."

"No, I suppose——"

"He would think he must stay—so we would have the passage money. That was no reason to stay."

"No. But it leaves you with so little. Oh, Mr. Sikorski, I think that was noble of you! It was a real—*beau geste.*"

"Whatever that means." Mr. Sikorski stared out at the morning sun. "I feel a little cold," he said.

4

At seven-thirty the next morning, O'Mara was in Frank Madeira's car in front of her house. Felicia was genuinely startled.

"When I didn't see you yesterday," O'Mara said, "or the morning before, I began to wonder."

"Steve O'Mara, what are you doing here?"

"Waiting for you, Gibraltar. Get in."

"No, thank you." But she was so surprised, and in a way impressed, that she hesitated.

"How can I talk to you, if you won't get in?"

"You can't."

"How can I tell you my whole life's changed, my whole attitude toward you—— Get in, Gibraltar."

"I wonder," she said—the scene was so absurd, with people going sleepily past on their way to work, with the first smoke coming out of chimneys—"I wonder why I never get really angry at you."

"Because I'm the very best friend you've got in the world."

Felicia shook her head.

"If you don't get in," he said, "how can I tell you I want to marry you?"

She looked at him closely. "Good-by," she said. "I've got to find a job."

"Felicia, listen."

She turned away. "The streetcar won't be drunk, or talk in riddles."

She heard his door slam, though gently. She expected he'd be furious, but he waved cordially as he passed. His face looked a little sad.

That night, in Joan Urban's house, Theophil Komar asked: "Any luck, Felicia?"

"No, not a thing."

"I may get a job with the city. They're taking two men on in the welfare department."

"Oh, fine. . . ." She said, "Komar, do you know Frank Madeira?"

"Everyone knows Frank."

"What's he do for a living?"

Komar laughed. "You really don't know?" He leaned towards her, and his whisper was admiring. "Bootlegger. One of the best rackets in town."

"I see. I—I suppose there's money in it."

"Piles. While it lasts."

"I see." . . . Walking home, Cecile said, "Felicia, what are you going to do?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, gosh, there's Joan getting married, and she's happy —and you have all kinds of chances but you're sort of— fussy."

"Stubborn. That's the word."

"And you've broken up with Mark Standler, haven't you?"

Felicia said nothing.

Cecile took her hand. "Haven't you?"

"Yes."

"And there's Pete Zonak, who's just crazy about you."

"Maybe."

"Oh, but he is, dear. Believe me, I'll *grab* the first man who wants to marry me."

"No, you won't."

"You bet I will." Cecile giggled. "Darling, I couldn't ever, ever imagine you an old maid."

"No?"

"Never. Not you. But how would you feel, if Joan gets married, and I get married, and everyone——"

Felicia looked up at the cold, clear sky. The wind was rising and there would be snow, perhaps, tomorrow. "I feel that way now."

Cecile's face turned toward her.

"Cecile, did you ever walk by the French church when you were a little girl? I walked by it often."

"Don't brag," Cecile said. "I walked *into* it."

Felicia smiled. Cecile's feet slowed, as though in bewilderment.

"You're kind of funny," Cecile said. "You're different from me and Joan. You're a good kid, and a good friend, and you talk to us. But you keep a lot locked up inside you."

Felicia nodded. "That's what I tried to tell you," she said.

5

The morning Joan was married, the neighbors all waited outside the church to see her walk in. She was worth waiting for, in her long gown with a train, the kind Felicia believed all brides should wear.

As soon as Joan had passed by, the neighbors hurried in to their seats. Phil Kuznicki, white and visibly trembling, was already waiting near the altar. The organ was playing Mendelssohn, and the priest was ready to begin.

It was a good long Mass, with violin music and a soprano as well as the organ. Somewhere near the middle, the altar boys passed around the collection box—proceeds of which, according to parish custom, they would divide among them. The exchange of vows was, of course, in Polish. Felicia noticed the old folks listening critically. Later, at some length, they would discuss the priest's diction. Down in the second pew, Joan's mother happily wept.

When it was all over, Joan and Phil walked out to the sidewalk, and back to the church and down again a few times for the benefit of those taking snapshots. After they had gone —downtown, to have a formal portrait taken at the photographer's—the neighbors stood before the church discussing the ceremony. Felicia saw Pete Zonak grinning at her, and with sudden dismay realized he'd be somewhere around her almost the entire rest of the day. Gradually, as the wind rose, the crowd dispersed.

Felicia walked back to her house with Mother, the twins and Mr. and Mrs. Sikorski. Now was a time to rest, since the celebration later might be strenuous. (Mother spoke of one wedding lasting three days, with the bride and groom unable to get away till the second night.) Mr. Sikorski went to his own house and took a little nap.

Near one o'clock they all took the streetcar down to

Kosciuszko Hall. Right at the door was Kuznicki's brother. He refused to let them in until the Sikorskis and Mother and Felicia had taken a drink of whisky, straight. The tables were set up, the orchestra was playing, and the man with the bass fiddle walked toward them as they entered. Mr. Sikorski deposited a coin in the front of the fiddle. For the Zielinskis, Stefan (since he was born two minutes earlier, Mother explained to Stanislaw, who was not appeased) was given the privilege of dropping the coin. He dropped it with a flourish.

The wedding breakfast was good—soup and turkey and vegetables and salad and rolls and ice cream and coffee, with pitchers of beer and a few bottles of rye. Felicia could tell by Mother's intent expression that she was mentally calculating the cost. But that was no worry, since Joan would at least break even, later, after the guests had filed up and each left a money gift in exchange for a piece of the cake. . . . Across the table Pete Zonak had managed to acquire a seat, and was gazing at Felicia with doglike adoration.

After the breakfast, the tables were cleared away. One was set up as a bar, another was loaded with ham and sausage and cheese and bread and cake and pie, and the real celebration began. The orchestra swung into a polka—*and oh,* thought Felicia, *this is the nicest part.*

First, Kuznicki and Joan danced, all alone on the floor; then Joan danced with Kuznicki's father; then Phil with Joan's mother; then her mother danced with his father, and his mother with her father. After each dance the guests applauded warmly. *The very nicest part of the wedding,* Felicia thought, *the part I can never have.*

Everyone danced. She could see Pete Zonak had his shoes shined and was ready to go. As soon as he got her onto the floor, he said, "I wish it was us."

"I beg your pardon?"

Pete seemed to think he had said enough for now. He said

hardly another word, but the second time he danced with her, he said, "I'd do anything for you, Felicia."

"Pete, would you?"

He replied huskily, "Anything."

You could start by learning to dance, she thought, but she said, "I don't know, Pete. Maybe you shouldn't be seen with me."

"Good gosh, why not?"

"Please don't ask me to tell you."

"Felicia—is anything the matter?"

She shook her head. . . . Her mother said, "You look good with Pete."

"Thank you, Mother."

In less than half an hour he was back—just when Kuznicki was coming toward her, and she wished. . . .

Pete said, "If anything's wrong, you got to tell me."

"Pete, I can't."

"You got to. So I can help you."

"No matter what it is?"

He said huskily, "No matter what."

"Oh, but I can't tell you, Pete."

"You tell me."

Her eyes widened hopefully. "Pete—suppose you liked a girl—and wanted to marry her——"

Pete stumbled at that, but he nodded doggedly.

"And suppose—just suppose—this girl got in trouble——"

Pete's right foot froze to the floor.

"No, no, don't stop. . . . Pete—would you still want to help her out?"

Pete's voice seemed to come up, horror-laden, from his shoes: "You mean, in trouble—*with a man*?"

"Pete! You'd never tell——"

"Oh, gosh, of course——"

"I knew you wouldn't, Pete."

His trembling legs seemed to jar the words out of him: "How—how long?"

"It won't be very long now, Pete."

She would have liked to see his face, but she was gazing demurely at the floor. He stopped before the music stopped; led her carefully back to Mother. "You—you better sit down," he said.

She smiled up at him. "Thank you, Peter dear."

He tripped over the feet of a girl next to him. . . . She had a sedate waltz with Mr. Urban, sat out a dance, and Mother said, "What's the matter with Zonak—he stays over on the other side by the exit sign?"

"I can't imagine—you heard how nicely I spoke to him."

Then came Kuznicki, and Felicia was glad—bridegroom or not, he was the best dancer of all. "Oh," she said, "I do hope they'll play it. They haven't played it yet——"

They played it—*Polka Emilia,* the one she always loved. And the old folks said many young people had forgotten how to dance polkas, but not Kuznicki. He whirled her round and round the floor, their steps matching perfectly. She felt her hair flying, her face growing red, and the warm drops sliding between her breasts.

They invented new steps, kicked their heels up, and Kuznicki even stamped his feet right in time with the music, while the people clapped. He lifted her by the waist and spun her round clear off the floor. . . . Over by the exit sign she caught a glimpse of Pete Zonak. His hands were lifted in horror before his pop-eyed face. Pete seemed to regard her as he would an egg, which might break at any moment.

O'MARA · WINTER

I

CAP'N WINKLER SWUNG his feet up on the desk in his dark cubbyhole and squinted ferociously at O'Mara. "You see what he's up to?" Cap'n Winkler said. "He sees this game's about over, and he's out to make all the dough——"

"Sure," O'Mara said, "I see."

What he saw was Felicia Zielinski—the trim brownness of her hair, the contour of her legs moving away from him up the street.

"It ever occur to you, if Frank had someone hijack the whole damn' cargo, he wouldn't have to split with me?"

"You think he's been doing that?"

"I don't know. It all depends," Cap'n Winkler said, "on if he's bright enough. Madeira's pretty bright."

O'Mara nodded. . . . *I had an idea,* he thought, *that she'd marry me just because I asked. Not a very good idea. Me, and my fifty bucks a week. It'll take much more than that.*

"What's he think *we're* going to do?" Cap'n Winkler grumbled. "With legal liquor coming back—— He's got plenty other rackets, he chisels in on Tierney, and we don't get a cent o' that."

"That's right." He thought: *Many things that might succeed with ordinary girls will not succeed with her. It's got to be something different, something big—something like what she herself might do. Something sincere.*

That's the word.

"So," Cap'n Winkler said, "I propose to say to him: Either we get cut in on everything he makes, or we drop him—and we start our own milk route, and we raise plenty hell in general. And brother, he won't care for that."

"I see."

"But we got to stick together, lad. That's why I'm explaining all this."

"Uh huh."

"Have you decided what you're going to do?"

"Yes," O'Mara said; "you bet I have."

"What?"

O'Mara glanced at him in surprise.

Cap'n Winkler swung his feet down from the table. His voice was shrill.

"Jesus Christ!" he said. "I don't think you understood a word I just now said."

2

He met her at the streetcar stop, where he'd waited since eight o'clock. He had built up an image of her in his mind, and there she was, more exciting than the image, stepping down into the slushy street——

"Felicia," he said, "I've got to talk to you. No, please—it isn't a gag."

She refused to go anywhere at first; suggested at last the library; said it should be open by now.

He glanced at the shelf behind her brown hair. *Principles of Educational Psychology. Techniques in Educational Tests and Measurements. Advanced Procedures in Secondary School Pedagogy.* He said, "This is a hell of a place to ask you to marry me."

Her eyes widened. "Were you serious?"

"Yes. With all my heart—oh, I know you think I'm crazy. Among other things. Wait a minute."

"All right."

She's laughing at me, he thought. *It's always been her defense.* "I work for Madeira, you know that. And Madeira's a lawyer—in a way."

"Yes?"

"Yeah. What he does with the law is skate around it—and outside it. And I've skated with him, plenty. But I'm through."

She was merely looking at him.

"Don't you get it, Felicia? I'm quitting. I get sixty bucks a week, and I'm throwing it over—for good."

"But why?"

"You're why."

Her face, so confident before, was for a moment confused. *It's good,* he thought jubilantly. *It's working.*

"You're going to join—us?"

"Don't worry, I'll find something. When I do, I want to talk to you again."

Her eyes were wide and thoughtful, no laughter was in them now, and he went on quickly, "I'm not asking you to do anything, or answer anything—yet. Just meet me here a week from now, and see what I have to say."

"Steve, I don't think——"

"Please," he said, "give me a chance. I won't bother you again, if you say so. And I'm trying to do my best——"

She hesitated only a moment; said quietly, "All right. . . ."

He walked bouncily down Pleasant Street, past the hotel, past the armory, going nowhere in particular. He was thinking: *I could do it. I could start again—suppose it took a year. I can take the ball back on my own one-yard line and fight it all the way up the field. A year, two years, what the hell——*

He stopped short; stared up in surprise at the trees. *Why, I think I really mean it.*

3

The redhead was disgusted; refused to tell him where Cap'n Winkler was. "He said he'd be back, but I'm not talking to you."

O'Mara laughed. "What's the trouble, Stout?"

The redhead sounded as though she meant it. "Anyone," she said, "anyone who'd brag about wanting to marry a girl just for one thing, without giving a darn what happened afterwards——"

"You've got me wrong, Outsize."

"Don't talk to me, you alley cat."

O'Mara laughed, leaning against the office wall. "It's like a trap, Fatso," he said. "I'm sorry I offend your sense of morals, but you've got me wrong—I'm not so clever."

"Oh, you—you, you——"

"Like a trap, see? You walk into it, step by step, and you know you'll end up with a bald head and a bunch of kids and no going out nights, but you walk into it just the same. You even think you'll like it in the trap."

"Any girl," the redhead said, "who'd believe a word you said——" There was a noise on the stairs, and feet pounding, and Cap'n Winkler swaggered in.

"I want to see you, Cap'n."

"Come in, my boy—come into the private office of my good partner, Mr. Frank Madeira. Partners in all things, we are."

Cap'n Winkler chuckled, closing the door. "Which is just what I'm going to tell him, but I wouldn't want that wench to know. What's on your mind, lad?"

"Not much. I'm quitting, that's all."

Cap'n Winkler's hard little eyes fixed on him.

O'Mara said, "You'll have to settle your own row. I'm getting out of this."

Cap'n Winkler's eyes never moved.

"You little pup," he said softly. "You yellow, snivelin', drippin' little pup."

4

Long, long afterward he remembered the moment when her eyes, her whole face seemed to soften as she looked at him. He had said—sitting in the library, with those preposterous books behind them—"I did it, Felicia."

"Yes, Steve?"

"I quit the lousy job—I'm starting another today."

That was the moment when she looked at him, and he had never seen her face like that, and he thought: *Maybe, oh maybe now. . . .* She said, "Sometimes I like you very much. I don't know why. Perhaps it's because in some ways you and I are much alike."

He had to grin. "Not, I hope, in all ways."

"No."

"When you start like that, I'm afraid you might say—you can be a sister to me."

Her low voice said, "I can't be anything, because—— It isn't any use, Steve. It never was."

He said quickly, "You don't understand, kid. You don't have to answer me, or even think about marrying me. All you have to do is—give me a chance."

She shook her head. "It wouldn't be any use. There—there'd always be someone else."

He nodded, bitterly, knowing now that the moment was gone, the chance—— "Standler?"

She said nothing.

"What's the point? You don't ever see the guy. He doesn't take you out."

She said nothing.

"Is he like you? Have you anything at all in common?"

She frowned. "I don't know. Perhaps," she said suddenly. "Perhaps it doesn't even matter. It's just that there is something between us—or was. Or might have been."

"You were just kidding me along, then. Just so——"

"I did only what you asked me to. It's true I wanted you to quit that job."

He looked down at the table; saw his fingers crushing the brim of his hat. "So it's no use—my getting up at six o'clock, or changing jobs, or manicuring my nails, or being a nice little boy——"

She shook her head. "I'm sorry, Steve. I can't help the way I am. I can't change. You may call me stubborn, if you wish."

He stood up; smoothed out the gabardine topcoat Madeira's money had bought. He grinned at her a last time. "Well, we done our best."

"I'm glad you're through with the job, anyhow."

"Yeah," he said. "Sure." He went out without saying good-by. He was down the library steps and halfway across Pleasant Street before he remembered he hadn't even offered to drive her home.

He walked down to Front Street and to the back of the furniture store. Carl was squirting a hose on Madeira's truck.

"Oh," Carl said, "hello."

"Carl, about that job driving your dump-wagon for you—it wasn't such a good idea."

"Why, no," Carl said. "That's what I thought. I could only pay you ten bucks a week and that other guy with the truck wouldn't pay you no more——"

"Just forget it," O'Mara said. "Forget we mentioned it." He turned towards the furniture store.

"Is Cap'n Winkler in?" he said.

5

"Should have seen him," Cap'n Winkler said. He made a noise like a hen cackling, as he coiled a rope on the bow of the *Jenny Clinton III*. "First he said he wouldn't so much as talk to me. Then he talked for an hour straight, all about how I'm a rat and how he gave me a job and made me a partner and now I'm trying to chisel in on him and I'm an ungrateful rat. He was just getting around to you, but then he shut up. 'Get to hell out!' he said."

"What's he going to do?"

"Can't say. Never know. Madeira's like that."

"I don't like it," O'Mara said. "He knows we're going out tonight."

"Sure. And maybe he's nervy enough to have his stooges cop the cargo again. Should he do so"—Cap'n Winkler bent down to a tarpaulin—"we got a little surprise. Look."

O'Mara squinted through the semi-darkness. "Hey! That looks like a——"

"Son, it *is* a sub-machine gun." Cap'n Winkler lifted it. "And it's yours to play with. You push the bolt forward, so. Shove the thingamajig up to here, for one long burst. Only, grab a hold of it, or it'll lift you right up to the sky."

"Hey," O'Mara said, "I'm scared."

Cap'n Winkler laughed. "Don't be silly, lad. We ain't going to harm no one. Only we'll spray their tires if we have to, and oppress 'em so with our superior fire-power. I aim to take them prisoners, and bring them up to Frank himself."

"Well, gosh——"

"Don't worry, lad. But those anonymous bastards," Cap'n Winkler said, "have got me mad. I aim to get at the bottom of this."

O'Mara looked up at the sky. "It's a bad night. Moony. And there'll be plenty of work for only two."

"Sure, but you and I got to check the whole route, this once. It ain't that I don't trust Carl and Santos. But Madeira has a way of getting people on his side."

O'Mara nodded. "He might have got me, but for the way he treated me. Like a kid."

"Fatal error," Cap'n Winkler said philosophically. "Arrogance. It always underestimates people. . . . O. K., she's as dark as she'll ever be. Cast off."

He grinned boyishly, as the *Jenny Clinton* slid out into the river. *He's younger than I am,* O'Mara thought. *He loves this because it's pure adventure. He would be the first to deny it.* . . . Cap'n Winkler sat beside him at the wheel.

"'Alone,'" he said, "'alone, all, all alone, alone on a wide, wide sea.' While Madeira sits on his broad fanny and counts the dough. . . . All right, go forward and lie down. We're going out. And don't get sick. . . ."

There was plenty of work, all right, in locating the schooner, and tying up to her, and transferring the cases, and making them fast to the *Jenny Clinton,* and casting loose, and starting home. But Cap'n Winkler was in good spirits, as the *Jenny Clinton* bucked the seas.

"Way I figure it, if they hit us on the road, they'll likely pick a new place. Question is—— What's that at our stern?"

"Nothing, Cap'n. . . . Where are we now?"

"Squibnecket Point, pretty near. Look aft again, son."

O'Mara still couldn't see or hear a thing. But in a while he made it out—a low gray shape, and the noise. "Boat. Maybe fifty feet. Big motor."

"Keep your eye on her." Cap'n Winkler accelerated the engine.

"You don't think——"

"I've heard it said," Cap'n Winkler yelled, "that you can get hijacked on the sea as well as land. Look out."

He swung the *Jenny Clinton* to port. O'Mara thought he could see the other boat turn too, cutting sharp as though to intercept them. There was an orange flash, and something spattering in the water before them.

"What's that?"

"Shot across the bow," Cap'n Winkler yelled. "Like in the movie pitchers. Fetch out that gun, lad."

"Hey, maybe that's——"

"Push that bolt up. Just give 'em a burst so they'll keep a distance. Shoot, for Christ's sake!"

O'Mara pointed the muzzle aft and jerked the trigger. He thought the gun would jump from his hands.

"Probably hit Nantucket," Cap'n Winkler grumbled. "Still, they may fall back. The way this dory vibrates—— *Jesus, lookit there!*"

And O'Mara saw it, off their bow—a cutter, gray and beautiful, bearing toward them in the moonlight. He yelled, "There! I told you——"

After that events happened so fast he never remembered how long they took, or even their sequence exactly. He heard Cap'n Winkler scream, "Federals, all right! Both of them. Get forward—pitch over those cases!"

He heard himself saying, or sobbing, "Madeira—he'll get us out——"

"Madeira!" Cap'n Winkler's voice was louder than the *Jenny Clinton,* louder than the wind whistling as he swung her back to starboard and the north. "Can't you see he's stooled on us? Gitting shut of us this way? He's got himself all covered, and we got to get loose or we'll never——"

Then O'Mara scrambled forward, because Cap'n Winkler had a revolver in his hand and his eyes were mad. He had half the cases overboard when the shots began. They whined and whistled over his head, and he looked back, but Cap'n Winkler was yelling, "Keep a-pitching, lad! Let me just get in past Cuttyhunk and we'll go places they can't never——"

He threw another case overboard; another; there was a hail of shots. He looked back; Cap'n Winkler was out of sight. He must be kneeling on the deck, but O'Mara could see his hand still holding the *Jenny Clinton* north. . . . O'Mara pitched over another case, and one more. The *Jenny Clinton* abruptly danced sideways into the sea and the sea knocked him down. He got to his feet; crawled frantically back to the wheel.

No hand was on it now. Cap'n Winkler lay on the deck, his face to the sky. In his neck, precisely at the Adam's apple, O'Mara could see where the bullet had come out.

O'Mara knelt beside him; grasped the wheel. Groaning, the *Jenny Clinton* straightened out. He saw, or thought he saw, the gray shore of Cuttyhunk before him in the moonlight. Coughing, gasping, like a woman dying, the motor of the *Jenny Clinton* stopped.

CAROLINE · WINTER

I

THE BOSTON PAPER had it at the bottom of page one. One man had been killed, and one captured, by Coast Guard patrol boats off Cuttyhunk. Shots had been exchanged, the men had attempted to destroy their cargo of liquor, but had not succeeded before their own craft was disabled. The one not killed was being held in ten thousand dollars bail.

Caroline asked over the top of the newspaper, "Haven't I heard this name before? . . . This bootlegger they caught —Stephen J. O'Mara."

John looked up from his oatmeal. "Oh, for goodness' sake. That must be the same one Mark went to college with."

"A Harvard man, involved in a thing like this?"

John was reading the story over her shoulder. "Believe Mark said he dropped out—must have been his freshman year."

"Oh." *How awful*, she thought, *for his family. What a terrible scandal in a little city like this, with everyone reading about it*—— "How do you suppose he ever got into that kind of business?"

John shrugged. "Of course, the way that reads, you'd think they'd broken up the Capone gang."

"Well, I suppose it may make good liquor even scarcer——"

John scoffed. "Scarcer, nothing. They always get the little

errand boys in a thing like that—they never seem to go after the big shots. The government'll put that boat up on auction and the big shots will probably buy it back. If they think it's worth their time—— Does it say what kind it was?"

"No, just a speedy motorboat."

"Oh, I wondered—— Well," John said, and went back to his oatmeal.

Even now, even in the morning, he was looking tired. Caroline said, "Of course it's terrible, but we all have our own troubles, haven't we?"

John made a noise which seemed to be an agreement.

"Haven't we, John?"

He looked at her, wiping his lips with his napkin.

She said steadily: "John, why didn't you tell me when Mr. Brimmer withdrew his support from the bank?"

He was looking at her with that surprise—surprise that she should possess a normal amount of intelligence—which always annoyed her so. "How'd you know?"

"I knew it that very day you came home from the bank and couldn't eat your dinner. And somehow I knew he would, the night we heard about Faith."

John shook his head. "Funny business. I'll always wonder whether there was anything personal in it or not."

"What do you think?"

He shrugged. "Maybe Jay had to do it—certainly made it sound convincing enough, with all the other commitments he has. I don't know."

Caroline sighed. "That Faith, I wonder what's become of her. Mark said he hadn't seen her around for months—not that Mark cares. That silly, silly girl." Her mouth tightened. "And yet, I blame Alec more, even if he is my own cousin."

John said, "He surely isn't any too bright. Giving up Harvard, his whole career, just to go chasing off like that——"

Caroline sighed. "There are so many things I can't under-

stand these days. But Alec—why he did it——" She pressed her hand to her forehead. "I wonder if we'll ever, ever know."

2

Even Boston was different. Caroline hardly enjoyed shopping any more, the stores were so deserted. Something of the pageantry she had always found in big department stores seemed vanished. Once they'd reminded her of the country fairs her mother used to take her to, down Cape Cod way, but now——

It was in Jordan's that she met Mrs. Brimmer. Caroline had just come through the doorway, she was waiting to go out. It would have been impossible for them to avoid meeting.

Mrs. Brimmer said, "I haven't seen you in such a long time."

"No." *I shan't let you bluff me or intimidate me,* Caroline thought, *I don't care a darn about you now.* "And how is Faith?"

"Faith is fine, thank you." Falling inflection. Saying: *That will be all.*

"And is she in Boston now?"

Mrs. Brimmer said brightly, as though imparting news of some interest but little importance, "Faith is taking a short trip abroad."

"Oh?"

Mrs. Brimmer smiled. "It seemed such a good time to go, with the rates of exchange so favorable."

"I understand," Caroline said. She nodded carefully. "I understand—perfectly."

Mrs. Brimmer looked at her for a moment. She turned to go, and turned back, and there was just a flicker of something—something—in the gray eyes under the silver hair: "Your husband's business—how is that?"

"My husband's business," Caroline said, "is splendid."

She stood in Jordan's entry gazing through the door. *Vile old woman,* her mind said. *From the first I thought it was you and now I shall always think so.*

She walked in a sort of furious, triumphant nervousness back to South Station. Perhaps it was just as well that Lucy Whipple was there as a distraction, waiting for the 5 o'clock. If she thought much more about that woman——

Lucy Whipple found them a seat, piled their bundles on the rack, opened a newspaper and demanded: "What do you think of it?"

"Of what, Lucy?"

"This row between the President and that Roosevelt."

"I haven't followed it very closely, I'm afraid."

"Well, the President wants Roosevelt to co-operate with him in certain measures he wants to take before Roosevelt gets inaugurated and Roosevelt won't have anything to do with it. Isn't that a fine spirit?"

"Yes, isn't it!"

"If things get any worse now," Lucy said darkly, "it'll be that Roosevelt's fault."

"Why, yes. Of course, it will."

"But look here." Lucy thumbed through the paper. "Just look at this chart."

It was a queer thing, with lines going up and down, like waves.

"That's a graph of the business cycle," Lucy said learnedly. "It's always gone up and down—never this far down before, of course. But notice how it always goes up again."

"Yes?" For the first time, Caroline took a slight interest in what Lucy was saying.

"When it reaches the bottom, it levels off for a while, and then goes steadily up. It must be pretty near the bottom now. So all we have to do is just wait a little longer. Just—sit tight."

"Why, of course," Caroline said gratefully. She smiled. *That was it. Sit tight.*

She told John about it, when she came home. He looked so worried—he customarily looked worried, these days—she thought it might cheer him up.

But John wasn't encouraged. "Well, I wish Lucy would practice what she preaches."

"What do you mean, John?"

"This sitting tight business. She came into the bank yesterday, and I just happened later to see her account and saw what she was up to." He flipped a match slowly, end over end, into the fireplace.

"She'd withdrawn her deposit—right down to the last nickel."

3

She remembered very little about the morning, because she was up too late to have breakfast with John. She didn't talk to him at all, and afterward was busy helping Mrs. Leary with the housecleaning. She remembered he hadn't finished his breakfast, and his bed looked hardly slept in.

Mrs. Leary mumbled, as she waddled about the house. Hard it was, plaguey hard, to clean a big house like this one in a day. Almost before they knew it, it was noon.

Lunch was never as pleasant as breakfast. Caroline shuddered, Mrs. Leary was so clumsy serving. It wasn't fair, it wasn't fair at all, but Caroline kept comparing her with Evalyn, with the servants Mother had. Mother knew how a servant should be trained.

It was immediately after lunch that the doorbell rang. Caroline answered it herself—Mrs. Leary always made such a poor impression. There were two men. One said, "Mr. John Standler?"

"No, he doesn't ordinarily come home for lunch. If I could help——"

"Afraid not, if he isn't home himself." Caroline saw one of the men staring curiously into the house. It occurred to her they might be newspaper reporters.

"He should be home for dinner."

The men tipped their hats. . . . Newspapermen took such queer notions. Once there was a controversy over where the *Charles Morgan,* or some other old whaler should be anchored. She recalled the young reporter who'd pestered John all day, until he gave out a statement saying something, anything, to get rid of him.

She helped Mrs. Leary finish the dishes, and then lay down for a moment on the library sofa. She hadn't had time yet even to glance at the morning paper. She scanned the headlines, wondering what the reporters, if they were reporters, had wanted to ask John about.

Yes, here it was—something about a banking crisis in (of all places) Nevada. She tried to read it, found it dull, and turned to the inside pages.

There was a short item about Stephen J. O'Mara. On the charge of violating the prohibition laws, he had been sentenced to three years in a federal penitentiary. On the charge of resisting arrest, he had been sentenced to two additional years.

Caroline stared up at the ceiling. Mark knew this boy; he was no older than Mark. What would they do to him? They would take his clothes away, and make him take a bath, and cut his hair, and give him a suit like everyone else's. He would have a job mending shoes in the prison shop—day after day, month after month, while outside spring came, and the summer sun, and the leaves changed, and he would not see it—day after day, month after month. *They will break his spirit or harden and embitter him,* she thought. *That is what they will do to him.*

John said everyone knew people higher up were involved in it, but no one could ever prove it.

Mrs. Leary thudded in, then, and began swishing a dust cloth around. "Mr. Standler said them pitchers are covered with dust."

Pitchers! No use explaining there was a difference between a picture and a portrait. To Mrs. Leary, all portraits were pitchers. "Mr. Standler never complains about nothing, only them pitchers."

Caroline sat up. "Here, let me help."

"No, no—I can do it now."

Mrs. Leary seemed resentful. She was alternately jovial and huffy, and one could never predict her moods. Caroline gave her up. "I believe I'll go downtown."

"I'm glad of that," said Mrs. Leary.

Caroline walked to William Street and down to the shops, but she didn't feel like buying. She noticed the men on the street corners—more of them now than the last time she was downtown. They seemed quiet, perhaps even sullen. Lucy Whipple said they should not be allowed to hang around like that, since they made people think conditions were very bad.

She came home with nothing. Mrs. Leary was already preparing dinner. She grumbled, "I don't suppose he'll be on time?"

"I'm afraid not," Caroline said, "if he isn't here by now."

It was dismal, eating dinner alone. But when John finally did come, she found it impossible to be angry.

It was long—very long—after Mrs. Leary had slammed the door behind her. "John, you should have let me know."

His face was utterly worn. "Yes, Caroline. I'm sorry."

She couldn't scold him further. "You'd better go to bed soon, dear."

She thought he gave her a rather queer look—believed it was merely fatigue.

"Yes." He said from the library, "I'm going to be busy a while, Caroline. If anyone comes—anyone at all—I'm not at home. Remember."

"I understand." She heard him go upstairs.

She sighed. Sometimes she thought she would scream, but Mother had said it was like this back in the panic of '93. Mother often told how Father had been cross as a bear, she had had to humor him (once she had even thought of divorcing him, Mother said, though Father never knew), but afterward everything had been all right and they had gone to Montreal on a sort of second honeymoon.

A wife must try to be a comfort and shield for her husband, Mother always said, guarding him from the stress of the world. And Mother was right.

So when the two men rang the doorbell again, Caroline smiled at them. "I'm sorry, Mr. Standler's still not home."

"You're sure, ma'am?"

"Oh, yes, quite."

They tipped their hats. . . . Caroline peered after them through the window. She could hear their feet, but they seemed to go only a short distance. She was under the impression they were standing across the street in the darkness, watching the house.

She shook her head vexedly. Newspapermen were so persistent.

She walked through the house to the kitchen; put away the dishes she had saved for John. Back in the library, she examined what Mrs. Leary had done. The portraits were dusted, certainly, but now Elias Standler was hanging crooked.

She straightened Elias, closed a drawer in the Governor Winthrop. She walked into the parlor. There were really too many pieces of furniture here, she realized—too much bric-a-brac. But which could be removed? Some they had had

since they were married; some, indeed, were wedding presents. . . . She bent to pick up a piece of thread; straightened up; held it before her eyes. In just that moment, she heard the shot.

It hung echoing in the air. She still could hear it, as she leaped up the stairs—her heart pounding, her chest choked—and down the corridor. "John! John!"

She saw the bed first—the documents neatly piled on it, the words on one reading plainly: "Within This Envelope is Guaranteed Life Security for John P. Standler." And then him, on the other side, on the floor. She let out all the air in her lungs: "*John!*"

He was half curled up. Mark's pearl-handled revolver was in his right hand. She knelt, grabbed him up by the shoulder, and saw the terrible hole, round and black and little, over his right eye.

"John!" she sobbed. "Oh, darling, darling. . . ." Sobbing, blindly, she drew him toward her; dark blood and scraps of gray smeared her dress.

That was the way she was when the two men came in.

FELICIA · WINTER

I

EVERYONE MUST HAVE KNOWN about it that night.

Felicia was up at the Urbans'. Joan and Phil were back from their wedding trip; Cecile too was there; Phil was trying to repair the radio, because Mrs. Urban wanted it to be working in time for the inauguration. Theophil Komar might drop by later, Mrs. Urban said. Komar was feeling better, now that he had a good job with the relief administration; came around more often. He might know about the radio, Mrs. Urban said.

Far below them, they heard Komar when he came—heard him pounding along the walk, to the back door, and up the stairs. Felicia looked toward the door, and saw that for once his sallow face was red. Komar yelled, "Hey, hear about Standler?"

All waited, looking at him. No one spoke.

"Just shot himself."

"No, for God's sake!"

She didn't have to ask it. Someone else asked it, and no one saw her half-rising, pressing her hand into her breast——

"Which Standler?"

"John. The old man."

"Is he dead?"

"I'll say he's dead.". . . All, except Felicia, crowded around him—asking questions.

"Well, it seems the son of a bitch—excuse me, ladies, I'm

excited—has been stealing from his own bank. Lost a lot in the stock crash, so to cover up, see, the bastard's been taking money out of inactive accounts and juggling the figures around so's no one would notice. Well—"

"When'd it happen?"

"Just now, I tell you! Everyone's talking about it downtown. They had a warrant out for him all day. Seems he went up to Boston, bought a ticket for Montreal, then he changed his mind and got on the New York train. Then he got off at Providence and came home again. By the time the cops caught up with him he was dead."

"Well, for the——"

"Komar!"

"Yeah?"

Someone's voice was strained and tense: "The bank, how is that?"

Komar shrugged. "They say lots of people got the inside tip and been taking money out all day. The bank's probably hard up for money anyhow. That's how they caught him—checking up."

Felicia said, "Excuse me." She knew her voice was small and frightened, like a child's. "I've got to go—I've got to go home."

"Felicia." Komar's face was anguished. "I didn't know you were here, Felicia. Honest to God."

"It's all right, Komar. Good night, everyone. *Dobranoc. . . .*"

She went quickly to the door. Behind her she could hear the silence. But someone was coming after her.

"Felicia——" Cecile closed the door behind them. "Dear, I don't think anyone noticed, but your face——" Cecile flung her arms around her. "Oh, my poor darling, you mustn't, you mustn't. He'll be all right——" And Cecile's body shuddered with sobs.

Felicia shook her head. "It's not Mark I'm thinking of." She stared, dry-eyed, over Cecile's shoulder. "I'm thinking of my mother."

2

Mother was up at six o'clock. Before Felicia was dressed, she was ready to go.

"Ma, the bank doesn't open till nine."

"I know. I will be there when it does."

Mother was nervous, eager, like a soldier before battle, Felicia imagined, *like a racehorse before the race—oh, bull. Like my poor mother on a terrible day.*

"Ma, please let me go."

"No. I put it in. I'll get it out." Mother jerked her coat around her shoulders. "Get my umbrella."

"Why? It's not raining."

"You will see," Mother said. "Get it." She went out, umbrella in hand.

At eight o'clock the twins bounded out of their bedroom. "Phil, how about some breakfast?"

"All right, coming. And don't call me Phil."

They ate like wolves. "Phil, will you blow up your old basketball?"

"No, blow it up yourselves, or play with it flat—I'm busy today."

"Doing what?"

"Waiting," Felicia said.

They scraped their plates. "Can we go now?"

"'*May* we go now.' . . . Yes. Don't be late."

"No chores, Phil?"

"No chores."

"Oh boy!" They raced to the door, leaving it open behind them.

Felicia looked at the clock. *Eight-twenty-five. Mother must be at the bank by now.*

She sat down and stared at a piece of stationery. "Dear Mark: I want you to know how sorry——"

She threw the paper away, took another. "Dear Mark: This is the only way I have of saying——"

She pushed all the stationery aside, laid down her pen. *One thing at a time, one thing at a time.*

Eight-thirty-eight. At eight-forty, Cecile came in. "Felicia, are you all right?"

"Yes, certainly."

"You looked so terrible—— You know what they said after you left?"

"What?"

"Well, Komar said that someone was saying downtown that the other big shots in the bank knew all the time that something fishy was going on. But they didn't do anything, up until it began to look as though the bank might fail anyhow. Then they exposed Mr. Standler—so if it did fail, he'd be the goat and no one would blame them. So that's what they did."

"Oh."

"Doesn't that make you feel better?"

Felicia almost laughed, the question was so absurd. "Thank you," she said. . . . It was after nine when Cecile left. The bank was open now.

Nine-thirty. Ten. Ten-thirty. I'll go crazy, Felicia thought, *if I just sit here, waiting. Eleven. Eleven-thirty.*

Eleven-forty. Eleven-forty-two. She heard Mother's feet dragging up the back steps.

Felicia jumped up. It seemed to take Mother a long time, just to open the entry door, close it, walk two steps to the kitchen door. Well, she'd expected Mother would be tired.

She hadn't expected Mother would look like this. The collar of her coat was half torn away, her cheek was scratched, her hair was flying wild.

"Ma!"

Mother said nothing. She stumbled toward the chair by the stove.

"Here, let me take your coat."

Mother sank slowly into the chair. She stared straight ahead, said nothing.

"I'll make you a cup of tea."

Making it, watching Mother, she wondered: *Where have I seen that look before? I have seen it on a thousand faces——*

"Here, drink this."

Mother took a sip, and sighed.

"Ma, what happened?"

Mother's voice was flat with weariness. "I was there early enough. So were many others—maybe a hundred, waiting for the bank to open. After a while the police came and made a sort of line."

"Yes?"

"And then they opened the bank. The police were letting in a few at a time. Oh, many people were there then. I was almost at the front of the line. A fat lady pushed in ahead of me." Mother's eyes flashed. "I pushed her out. She hit me. I hit her. The police made us both go back to the end."

"Oh, Ma!"

"I think it made no difference. I think there was no money left anyhow in that bank by then. . . . In a minute a man came out and said the bank was closed. That was ten-thirty. The police told everyone to go away. Some of us stayed, but after a while we saw it was no use and went home."

She stared at the teacup. *That look—— Yes. I remember the photographs of the Great War: Polish peasant surveys the wreckage of his home. Russian peasant and the body of*

her son. The everlasting, quiet, hopeless face of the peasant in disaster. . . . "Ma."

"Yes?"

From here you could see the shelves in the pantry, see what was on them. "There's only one thing to do."

Mother looked up quickly. "Of course some day they may give the money back——"

"Your sons don't need to eat some day. They need to eat tomorrow. Today."

Mother lowered her eyes. The clock ticked loudly. Felicia stood, waiting.

Mother said, her head down, "How do I do it?"

"Go to the City Hall—the first floor. Ask where to find the room for Widow's Aid. Don't expect them to give you anything for me—I'm over twenty-one."

She didn't look up or answer.

"Ma, perhaps I can get it just as well."

"No," Mother said. "I will go."

Gently, Felicia took the cup and saucer from her lap. She went into Mother's bedroom; hung up her coat. You had to be careful hanging up Mother's things, her closet was always so neat. "Ma?"

"Yes."

"What happened to the umbrella?"

"Oh." For the first time, Mother's voice had a little life, a little pleasure, in it. "I broke it over the lady's head."

But when Felicia came back she was still staring at the floor.

MR. MEANS kept mumbling how deplorable it was, how sorry he was, to have to come on such a day. Mr. Means had always been unintelligible to Caroline, and now he was worse than ever. He talked about certain documents which had to be executed; certain options which could be elected. Certain legal processes could be inaugurated——

"Please, Mr. Means," Caroline said, "please tell me clearly what to do."

There was the question, Mr. Means said, of immediate and voluntary restitution.

Caroline said, "Yes, of course. Everything. Every cent."

Insofar as possible, Mr. Means added judiciously, and fingered his black string tie. Caroline vaguely remembered such a tie the last time she saw him, the time old Mark died—possibly the same tie. That was almost twenty years ago, and Mr. Means looked no different. Old Mark was dead, John was dead, but Mr. Means—— A sound man, John always called him—an expert on maritime law. John always said Mr. Means planned to go on living till maritime law became important in this port again.

John always said.

Immediate restitution, Mr. Means was grumbling, would have an unfortunate effect on certain negotiable securities. If liquidated now, all possibilities of a future increment—— Mr. Means waggled his head and went on mumbling. The building on Purchase Street, mortgaged, two years ago. The

house, mortgaged. Three months ago. *Let us now consider the insurance policies, some of which, unfortunately, are held as securities for loans. However, others——*

"Mr. Means, just what does it leave us?"

Mr. Means protested. *Impossible to say, difficult to estimate. So many contingencies. . . .* She got it out of him at last. A small annuity for herself. Untouched and untouchable. A small, a very small, lump sum for Mark.

"Thank you, Mr. Means."

He would proceed with the work, Mr. Means said briskly, *and trouble her as little as possible. Certain documents——*

"Mr. Means, would you like to see John?"

Yes.

He passed by the portraits into the living room. When he came out she saw with a deep surprise that Mr. Means was crying.

After that she perceived persons and events vaguely, dully. Telegrams came, and in his own room she saw Mark reading a letter. Mr. Means had advised that she keep Mark there if possible; someone downtown had spoken against John, Mr. Means heard, and Mark had punched his face. *Why should anyone feel bitter toward John, now? . . .* A wide black band was on the left sleeve of Mark's gray coat. Those awful bands—she had never liked them. People wore them in Boston. She would go back to Boston, where there was a little island of her friends, of her mother's friends.

Men came to see John—big men, old men. She had never thought of John as old, but his friends were old. Mrs. Leary came in, weeping, and made the dinner. Caroline ate no dinner. She sat in a corner of the living room and remembered her mother. Mother would call for her at Miss Talbot's, at that awful day school, and take her home. People came in, but they were less real than Mother. Mother was a pretty and kind woman, pleasant with little girls.

More people came. Very late in the evening a number of John's lodge brothers filed through the door. They grouped themselves before his bier. One—he had a black and red ribbon around his neck—brought forth a book and read:

"We are gathered in this solemn hour to hold a last meeting with our beloved brother, who has gone to his rest in the Eternal Lodge. . . . What say you of our brother?"

Another read: "Our brother was a Christian without reproach, a worthy citizen of our Republic, a true and loyal member of our great Lodge."

"What say you of our brother's charity?"

"Our brother was kind to all about him, and succored the poor, the needy, the oppressed."

"What say you of our brother's honesty?"

"Our brother dealt with no man deceitfully, was fair and open in all his ways. . . ."

It wasn't real, it wasn't real. To Caroline none of these faces and voices was truly there. She was a little girl in the corner of an unpleasant room, and in a while her mother would be coming and would take her home.

FELICIA · SPRING

I

THIS WAS THE DAY. She took down her tan suit, which he had always liked. She pulled her best stockings up her leg. Shoes—— *No, not those high heels; lower ones.*

She knew where she'd be walking today.

In the kitchen she said, "Ma, I'm going out for a while."

"All right."

Her mother did not look up. Felicia stood regarding her. She thought quite calmly: *Good-by, Mother. One way or another, all will be different when I come home.*

Her mother asked of the tablecloth, "You won't wait to hear the radio?"

"No," she said.

She walked slowly up the street. *A queer day*, she thought. *A curious silence in the air. I can't even hear the streetcars. This little man trudging toward me——*

"Hi, Mr. Sikorski."

"*Dzień dobry, Felcia.*" He stopped, looked at her somberly. In Polish, he said: "You have heard the news?"

"What news, Mr. Sikorski?"

"The banks. They are all closed."

"Oh—all in the city?"

He was looking at her incredulously. "All everywhere, Felicia. The whole country. The entire commerce of the

nation," Mr. Sikorski said, and Felicia believed he must have heard the expression on the radio, "is now at a standstill."

"Oh!" She was frightened. She thought: *Maybe I'd better wait. Maybe he won't be home*—— She shook her head; smiled at Mr. Sikorski. "You don't speak English anymore."

"No."

"The school?"

"The city has closed all night schools."

"They'll open some day."

"And some day," Mr. Sikorski said, "I hope to get my job back. That is how far my plans go." He turned away. His face was dirty and his back slumped. He made, Felicia considered, the very picture of defeat.

She walked thoughtfully up the street. *Someone, perhaps, can blame him. I can't. Too many have been defeated. My mother fought against taking charity and has lost. Though she lives forever, and earns a million dollars, she will never get over that defeat.* O'Mara too was defeated, perhaps the bitterest defeat of all.

She was at the quiet avenue now. She stood for a moment on the corner, feeling the breeze warm on her back, warm on her shoulders and on the deep V of her throat. Then she crossed over to the drugstore.

Inside were several men, but they scarcely glanced at her. They were crowded around a radio. A voice was saying: "This is pre-eminently the time to speak the truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. . . ."

Felicia walked back towards the telephone booth. She closed the door, but through the glass she still could hear the voice: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself——" With her right hand she moved the nickel slowly toward the slot. Her other hand was clenched.

Mark Standler was beside his car, waiting, when she stepped off the streetcar at Fort Phoenix.

"Felicia!" It hurt her just a little, to see the way he limped toward her. . . . "I'm glad I was in."

"So was I."

"I don't see why you wouldn't let me drive you over——" The breeze rumpled his hair. He looked older, that was all. He said, "Thank you for the letter."

"I thought you'd prefer to be alone. I did."

He smiled gently. "You're always so right about everything."

She took his hand, and turned toward the sea. He said, "Well?"

"Don't say anything, Mark."

There was no one on the beach, no one by the fort. Mark said, "Gosh, I've got to say it: It's a perfect day."

Felicia laughed and went ahead of him along the shore. The sea was high. She thought: *Suppose it's not there, suppose it's covered by the tide.* . . . The big rock was there all right, uncovered, though a little wet.

They sat on the rock—Felicia could feel the dampness seeping through her skirt—their arms holding each other on it, looking at the sea. No craft were coming into this harbor, none going out. The chimneys on the mills across the bay gave out no smoke. Mark said,

"Felicia——"

"Let me say it, Mark."

His eyes were wide and clear. *Our children will have brown eyes. If we have any children. If*—— She said, "Do you remember the last time we were here?"

"Yes. I asked you to marry me."

"Ask me again, Mark."

His eyes, his whole face was startled. "I can't. How can I——"

"It was a question," she said clearly, "of deciding first whether we wanted to, and then whether we could. How soon. You said that. I couldn't, then, because you didn't need me. You need me now, more than anyone—— Ask me again, Mark."

"I can't!"

"And you said, or would have said, that pride was nothing—— Ask me, Mark."

"No."

"Then I will." She turned to him. Her breast was against him. "Mark: will you marry me?"

She waited, seeing his face vague against a big sky, the sea—— *This is it,* she thought wildly, feeling her heart beating and beating against his chest, *of all my life this is the moment——*

"Yes," Mark cried. "Damn it, yes! I'm not proud the way you were proud. If we love each other——"

"Oh, we do."

He was kissing her, earnestly, passionately, his body pressing so against hers that she nearly fell from the rock. She kissed him back. *With me this is different,* her mind said. *Even the night of Uncle Anzelm's party there was nothing like this. Something between us has fallen away and nothing is between us.* "Darling, I'm slipping."

"Oh."

"Never mind, darling." *If there's anyone up at the fort,* her mind said absurdly, *go tell them we're to be married. This is right and proper. . . .* Gently, she held him from her.

"You know," she said, "all this time—I've always been faithful to you. Even in my mind."

He said proudly, "My Felicia."

"That sounds like a book by Willa Cather! And I might

make a pun about *Shadows on the Rock*. But oh, darling, I won't. . . . It's true. I was."

"Shadow, I'd like to take this rock home in my pocket."

She asked quite soberly: "Where is your home, Mark?"

"You mean——"

"Yes."

"Remember Alec Marwick? I've had a letter from him—he's out near Portland, Oregon."

"I remember him very well." She was looking over his shoulder as they talked, looking at the sea.

"Alec says there are opportunities out there. If you had as much as a hundred dollars you could buy into a little gas station, for example. Then afterward, perhaps something else——"

"Is that what you want to do?"

"Yes, it is."

"All right. Help me up."

"But Felicia, I don't think——"

"I'm wet!" He began brushing her off, quite thoroughly, and she laughed. "Really, darling——"

"Aren't you my woman now?"

"Yes." She took his hand, picked a way over the rocks. "I'm trying to tell you that."

"But look, about Oregon——"

"Please don't talk nonsense. If we belong together, we belong together. In everything. Starting now."

"But——"

"You're so much wiser than I am," she said, "so much better balanced. You haven't this inferiority, this immigrant's pride—— I'm glad of that, so don't talk nonsense. And come on."

Starting the car, he said, "We forgot the rock."

"There will be other rocks."

At the end of the bridge he turned to the right. The rail-

road station looked bleak and deserted. They walked around the side to the door near the tracks, keeping in the sun. And the tracks gleamed, stretching out—to Boston, to Chicago, to Denver and the West. Felicia said, "Now I know how my parents, how the immigrants, felt."

"How did they feel?"

"They felt," she said gravely, "as though on the edge of a frontier—of a great and unknown wilderness. We are on a frontier, too, Mark, perhaps a harder one."

"Yes."

"I never knew before how brave they had to be."

They went into the station. The ticket agent looked startled, as though unused to customers. Mark said, "What's the fare to Portland, Oregon?"

"One round trip?"

"No," Felicia said. "Two. One way." . . . They went out through the back door, and Felicia looked up at the city, which was above them as on a slope. There was something about the slope in a book somewhere. . . . Mark said, "There's one more stop we might make."

"Yes," Felicia said, "the City Hall. It's on the first floor, and the sign says——"

Mark stopped short. "How do you know?"

"I saw it once when I was a little girl. I never forgot it. It says, '*City Clerk. License Bureau. Marriage Licenses.*' I used to dream about getting married when I was little."

"Was I in the dream?"

"No, Mark. I never thought much about the bridegroom. Just about me, and my gown with lace and a long train, and the big church wedding—it won't be like that now."

"No."

"And I had six bridesmaids and a flower girl. Everyone was to be there—my father. And my mother. It'll take her a long time to be reconciled to you, Mark Standler."

"I know."

"I was beautiful, of course. And I was to make the gown myself. Now it won't be like that, but it'll be the same wedding, Mark. The same, because—— Yes."

"Thank you, darling."

She smiled, looking over Mark's car at the hill above. But she did not see the streetcar tracks now, or the shabby streets, or the dirty buildings. She saw a town rising in tree-covered, flowering terraces towards the sky, the town the queer man in *Moby Dick* had seen as he sailed down the river to the sea.

She and Mark got into the car and drove away up the hill.

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